

Becky Seidel

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Testimony to **Portland City Council** on the **Shelter to Housing Continuum Project**, **Recommended Draft**

Dear Portland City Council, Portions of the language in the Shelter to Housing Continuum recommendations from the Planning and Sustainability Commission, in short, allow homeless tent camps in Portland parks for up to 180 days. This provision will, in fact, remove parks from public use. Historical and present experience shows that homeless camps have a detrimental impact on the safety and livability of surrounding spaces. Currently, the amount of homeless we have allowed in the City to camp wherever they wish has caused tremendous impact on business, freedom to walk around without being harassed and huge amounts of trash everywhere. While I am sympathetic to the plight of the homeless, what I do not want to see, by now paying a new tax, is temporary shelters being placed in one of the few places we can go as a family and feel safe in this City. We pay this tax to see people being taken off the streets and put into viable housing and given access to services so that they do not return to living on the streets. In 2014 we moved to Boston, MA. We lived there for five years, all the time wishing we were back in Portland. Finally, in late 2019 we were able to relocate back to our beloved city. We have been shocked and dismayed by what has occurred in the five years we were gone. We no longer feel like visiting downtown is safe. Our children have had to witness numerous people injecting drugs, defecating, fighting and harassing us as we walk around town. We have to dodge back and forth across streets as tents block the entire sidewalk as we walk around the city. The one bright spot in all of this has been the city parks. We love going to them, getting fresh air and being able to play freely. If you allow shelters to be placed in the park, you are looking at decreasing access to the rest of the community, not only because of reduced space, but also because of reduced safety. The City of Portland has yet to show how the homeless can be managed in a safe and clean way and at some point, an innocent person or child will be affected by the situation that is being created. We are sadly beginning to think we made a poor choice moving back to Portland. While I don't have a solution for this situation, I do know that placing shelters in the park is a bad idea. I barely feel safe allowing my children to walk around the neighborhood as it is. If a shelter was to arrive in the parks nearby, I would no longer allow my children to walk around alone or visit the parks without at least one adult present. Honestly, I am tired of waking up each morning to trash on the streets, needles stuck into fences and human feces on the sidewalks. It's time to find ways to get these people into real housing and get them help, not shuffle them around from temporary place to temporary place. We are paying high taxes for real, long term solutions. This is not a real, long term solution. Portland can do better. Thank you for your time, Becky Seidel

Testimony is presented without formatting.

