

Courtney Kemmer

#278549 | March 17, 2021

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

I am writing regarding the S2HC. I have been a social worker for over 20 years and have worked with many agencies in Multnomah County trying to connect individuals to safe housing. People experiencing houselessness are dying and suffering and I appreciate the efforts to find creative solutions. I support efforts that involve social service agencies who are able to provide outreach and connect individuals to the services they need, however I am very opposed and do not support efforts that would allow the temporary siting of shelters in parks or the continuation of people camping in parks. My children and I don't go to our local park as often as we did prior to COVID because of the individuals who camp in it or near it. There are needles and feces everywhere, we have had people with untreated mental illness or who are intoxicated say sexually inappropriate things to us, yell aggressive comments and urinate in front of us. Dogs that live in the tents and RV's with their owners are often unleashed. There is an unbelievable amount of garbage all around the camps and RV's that feely overflow into the park. Camping in and around parks should not be allowed for any period of time and our city shouldn't allow people to camp wherever. We should designate specific areas for camping and RV's on unused land and only allow individuals to camp in those areas. Widespread camping does not provide social services the opportunity to reach everyone who needs housing. I agree that it is unkind to direct campers to leave unless there is another place to safely shelter, but it is also unkind to children to allow camping to continue to occur where they play. Parks should be a safe place for children and not a place where they feel fear. Not all individuals who are houseless are to be feared, but the unsafe situations that my children have experienced at parks has been connected to individuals who are houseless and experiencing untreated mental illness or using substances. I support the expansion of short term shelters and camping in vacant lots, but please do not include parks in your plan.

Testimony is presented without formatting.