

# Ray Horton

**#278684 | March 21, 2021**

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

I must write to express my alarm at the proposed plan to open our city parks as homeless camps. As I read it, this gives over all public spaces, city parks, sidewalks, city parking structures, city hall property, public trails, riverside beaches to a homeless population without regard to or concern for the rest of the people who live in Portland and pay the taxes to support and maintain these public facilities and spaces. The homeless campers have not shown any respect for the services which have been provided with literally millions of dollars in public funding over the last five years. They discard their trash around their temporary sites until even they can't abide it and move on, leaving public resources to clean it up; they publicly defecate and urinate in violation of state and city law; they refuse to use the free shelters when offered; many are mentally ill, drug addicted, and violent. This is the population that will under this proposal inhabit our parks with not just impunity, but with a legal cudgel to disallow any civic ordinances or legal recourse protecting the larger community from their depredations. To invite this kind of trouble into spaces where children play, families picnic, seniors walk, and people exercise, is simply a terrible, irresponsible idea. The homeless camps have proven to be an unsanitary, unhealthy, dirty, dangerous, public health hazard, a trashed blight on our city, and their spread to public spaces should not be encouraged and supported by measures such as this poorly considered plan. Experience with the continuous trouble with the Springwater corridor should be more than adequate evidence of the risks of such a policy. This is not keeping parks "sacred". This is keeping parks safe. There is no question the problem of homelessness and all of its attendant subsets of social dilemmas of drug abuse, mental and emotional instability, poverty, crime, and random violence need to be addressed at a governmental level, but this policy is not the tool for the job and will not accomplish the desired and necessary solution, but will in fact only exacerbate the troubles.

Testimony is presented without formatting.