

# Carolyn Piszczek

**#278821 | March 23, 2021**

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

The policy toward public camping instated by the housing emergency declaration in 2015 has left public spaces like bike paths, sidewalks, and commercial districts usable only to the unhoused population who choose to live and occupy these spaces. This has led to a steady deterioration in the livability of Portland. My family of four includes two young girls — the public indecency, needles, garbage, verbal insults, and human waste on public paths and sidewalks make family bike rides and walks to local businesses unsafe. The current S2HC proposal extends this policy and expands the public space options for homeless encampments which will only further deteriorate the livability of our city. Our community has been patient and tolerant with homeless encampments and we were told in 2015 that it would be temporary while awaiting adequate shelter availability. Five plus years have passed and yet unplanned public camping is growing and the problems with health and safety are compounding. More of the same without accountability is not the answer. The current proposal does not promote a society built on mutual respect and public spaces for use by all; instead, it prioritizes the needs of the unhoused community who choose to live outside of designated shelter spaces over the rights of all other residents. Public policy needs to be equitable and just. It MUST ensure safety, child wellbeing, public health, clean and maintained neighborhoods and public spaces. Allowing people to live in public spaces of their choosing without any expectation of decent behavior or community stewardship is unacceptable. I request the following revisions to S2HC: 1) “Open space” camping must specifically exclude property that has been developed for public use like parks, bike paths (and the areas immediately adjacent), and golf courses. Permitted “open space” public camping sites must be specifically listed in the plan and must be areas not currently utilized by the public. 2) No permanent changes to the zoning codes at this time. Let Title 15 housing emergency declaration expire so that unplanned and unauthorized public camping is no longer allowed. 3) An enforcement plan must be delineated and be expressly coupled to the creation of any new public camping policy so that, as new managed shelters are established, unmanaged camps are shut down, removed, cleaned up, and then monitored so they can not reestablish. Individuals who choose not to go to provided housing or shelter cannot be allowed to simply camp where they want. 4) Each managed shelter site must have a detailed description of the operation and implementation plan. A responsible person or authority must be designated prior to opening and a publicly available and responsive person must be listed and maintained for each site. Thank you for considering my input.

Testimony is presented without formatting.

