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#279240 | March 29, 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 difficult to use due to the proliferation of tent communities by the unhoused population who currently occupy these spaces. This has led to a steady deterioration in the livability of Portland. I am deeply concerned about Portland's population of unhoused residents. I volunteer with the my neighborhood association 's coalition that works to promote the rights and livability of houseless individuals. In my work as a health care provider, I care for a diverse and highly vulnerable population, and I see the devastating effects of skyrocketing real estate prices in Portland. I agree that affordable housing is the number one most important issue facing the city right now. However, the current S2HC proposal expanding the public space options for homeless encampments will deteriorate the livability of our city, significantly disturb the ability of the public to enjoy our precious parks, and will further decrease tax revenue due to residents choosing to leave the city for lack of viable solutions to this problem. Our community has been patient and tolerant with homeless encampments. We were told in 2015 that it would be temporary while awaiting adequate shelter availability. Since then, Portland and Multnomah county voters have approved more than 1 billion dollars in taxes specifically for housing and homeless community support (\$258.4 million in 2016, \$652.8 million in 2018, \$2.5 billion 10-year tax in 2020). Five-plus years have passed 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 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, public health, clean and maintained neighborhoods and public spaces. These are the tenants that make our city a livable community and a sought-after location to visit. Allowing people to live in public spaces of their choosing without accountability of 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 move to provided housing or shelter should not be allowed to 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.

Testimony is presented without formatting.