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#279389 | March 30, 2021

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

Dear Mayor Wheeler and Portland City Commissioners, Thank you for the opportunity to testify and give input to the S2HC. First off, I am supportive of the efforts this body and our community is making to reduce homelessness. While I do not believe there is an easy solution, I do believe that the homeless need places where they feel safe and have both sanitary and social services available to them and not just hodgepodge campsites strewn all over the city. That being said, I have some concerns about parts of S2HC. Our community has been patient and tolerant with homeless encampments for many years now. Title 15 was supposed to be temporary while more adequate shelter became available. 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 and yet public camping has grown and the problems with health and safety are compounding around our once beautiful city. I moved to Portland in 1992 and it definitely doesn't look like the city I once knew and loved. As a taxpayer who has voted for many bonds meant to improve parks I think you must remove "OPEN SPACE ZONES" from consideration for either temporary or permanent shelters EXCEPT for declaration of emergency by the City Council due to a catastrophic disaster. This includes Parks, Hydro Parks, greenways, and other property that has been developed for public use like bike paths (and the areas immediately adjacent such as parking lots), and golf courses, and PIR. With that said, I think language must be tightened up regarding the current proposal to allow the temporary siting of shelters in parks and open space for no more than 180 days to address the following: What follows a given 180-day period? Can the occupation be renewed for another 180 days? Is it acceptable to break down a given shelter and rebuild it 24-hours later, starting another 180-day period? As mentioned above, the current housing emergency has been in effect since 2015. The community has expressed strong objection to allowing shelters in parks and natural areas. Hopefully, this isn't just the Council trying to get around this opposition by using the term "in any location" during a declared emergency. It sounds like the requirement that RV's and THOW's parked on private property must have a permanent recreational vehicle utility hookup that includes an electrical outlet, a water connection, and a sanitary sewer dump. Who will be enforcing that the property owner has ensured this utility hook up is in place and is operational before an RV or THOW can be placed on private property? I've read many accounts of women who do not feel safe in co-ed shelters and with many younger people living on the streets I believe it's imperative that designating a number of specific sites for specific populations whose needs vary, is one of the many

ways to support groups within the house-less community. A specific site for homeless families, one area for homeless teenagers, another for homeless immigrants, etc. Create a system to support these shelters and camps via onsite sanitation. Consider clean-up opportunities where homeless individuals can work ala "Civilian Corps" for which they could be paid. Involve the folks who are served. Encourage inhabitants to attain a sense of belonging by being involved in their community. A last couple of questions: Are you taking into consideration that there will likely be a subgroup of homeless who will always need support? Where will the funding come from to continue this support? How, will rules about capacity at these camps be enforced? Will the public be able to see a transparent accounting of how funds that have been allocated to the homeless issue are being spent for S2HC? I appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on this proposal. This is tough stuff and I'm hopeful that Portlanders and our elected officials can come up with tangible solutions. ~LY Biggs

Testimony is presented without formatting.