

From: [Tashina Bailey](#)
To: [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)
Subject: Testimony in support of agenda items 899-903
Date: Tuesday, October 25, 2022 11:15:54 AM

Dear City Council Members,

I own a fitness business in the Pearl District on NW 9th and Hoyt. My industry was hit exceptionally hard during the pandemic. The rebound in the Pearl District has been extremely challenging, in part due to the safety concerns, revenue impacts, staffing issues, and downtown aesthetics brought on by the failure of Portland to address the homelessness situation.

Our classes start in the very early hours of 6am and run through 7pm. I am constantly concerned for my client's and staff's safety and have put new and additional measures in place recently to help them feel supported. Often, when my staff arrives at 5:45am, there is someone(s) sleeping in our entryway, and my staff have to wake them up and politely ask them to relocate so that we can get into the building and open the business. Unfortunately, calling non-emergency now results in a hold time that is unrealistic. Even calling 911 results in a hold time. All of my staff are female, so putting them in this situation, in the dark, with zero support from police, is one of my stressors as a business owner. Instead of relying on police or other services, we have to rely on ourselves to handle any situation that comes to our doors.

Just in the past year, there have been a number of different situations that have impacted my staff and my business that could have been prevented had Portland not allowed camping on the streets. Over the past summer, in the middle of the day, a homeless person who had been camping in the alcoves on our block for a week assaulted one of my staff. She calmly asked him to move along, and he turned and started yelling at her and hit her while we were trying to lock the door and sitting on hold for 911. More recently, the maintenance personnel for the building that I rent was assaulted by a homeless person who has been camping in an alcove of the building, and police had to respond. I've had clients cancel their memberships, which is an additional revenue loss on top of an already stressed revenue number, because they don't feel safe coming downtown anymore.

A few blocks away from my business, the MAX station used to be a place where I would frequently use public transportation to travel from my home to my business. However, over the last 3 years, the MAX station has become one of the most dangerous places to be. My staff have had to find alternate means to come to the studio, and it's been difficult to hire staff. My clients that used to take public transportation have cancelled their memberships. Now, I drive to the studio every day because I don't feel safe using the Union Station MAX stop. Much of this is due to Portland allowing homeless camping on the streets.

In addition to the safety concerns, revenue impacts, and staffing issues is the overall appearance of my business when there are tents outside on the street. It's obviously a deterrent for any potential customer when there are unknown parties loitering on the sidewalk next to a business. Like my staff, my clientele is primarily female. Perception is everything, so allowing homeless camping to continue will only continue to deter people from my business.

Businesses have already closed in the Pearl District, including some other fitness locations,

because of decreased foot traffic and safety concerns brought on by the failure of the city to deal with the homelessness crisis. I understand this is a complicated problem that doesn't have an easy answer. However, the answer can NOT be to force the problem on the small businesses who are fighting as hard as possible to survive post-pandemic. The answer can NOT be to look the other way. The answer can NOT be to cut back on services and support.

The most recent proposal from the Mayor is the first step to reclaiming our city, restoring it to a place where residents and visitors want to frequent, and also providing the necessary tools to help all of the people who live in Portland -- both the housed and unhoused.

Thank you for your consideration. If you'd like additional information, please see my contact details below.

Thank you,

Tashina Bailey, Owner

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