

From: [sangraal aiken](#)
To: [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)
Subject: Plan to Address Homelessness in Portland
Date: Tuesday, October 25, 2022 12:33:50 PM

Portland City Council,

Thank you Ted Wheeler and Dan Ryan for finally announcing viable plans to meaningfully address the ills our city has been facing due to the homelessness crisis and proliferation of public unsanctioned camping. This is a complex and multi-faceted national issue and it is refreshing to see it being addressed from multiple angles rather than simply 'housing first'.

I am a liberal citizen of Portland, and I urge all council members to get on board with these plans, they are reasonable, common sense solutions that will reduce death and destruction, and the city's very future depends on their success. We cannot afford to wait decades for a solution to our national housing and healthcare issues. For the benefit of the housed and unhoused, we need to end public camping yesterday while continuing the hard work of addressing the deeper root causes of the suffering on our streets.

Living directly next to one of the Portland's most prominent and continuous public campsites, I have unwillingly become a first-hand witness to unrelenting human suffering and victim to an ever growing list of heinous criminal behaviors and frankly, the city has not been doing enough to protect everyone.

The city preaches the need for compassion for our 'most vulnerable' which is a wonderful ideal, that surely applies to some in the houseless community, but that rhetoric doesn't ring completely true with what people are seeing on the streets. Is an able bodied, 38-year-old man stealing cars and dealing meth and fentanyl from a tent outside my home for the last 2 years more vulnerable than my preschool age daughters? Was he more vulnerable than my family when he knocked on my door and threatened to burn my house down when I wouldn't give him money? Was he among our most vulnerable when he slashed the tires of all the cars on our block? I drove my kid to school with slashed tires that morning unknowingly because all the air in them had not yet bled out. Had those tires ruptured on that drive, this houseless individual could have caused a serious accident that could have injured or killed my family but yet he is still allowed to be my houseless neighbor.

It is offensive to me when I hear our leadership refer to people like this among our 'most vulnerable'. Government should not be deciding who is and who isn't more vulnerable, it needs to strive to protect everyone equally. Where is the concept of equal protection under the law? Does Portland's leadership not believe in the 14th amendment? Crimes of poverty are still crimes, and too many of them are not committed out of necessity and survival but instead out of anger and a disregard for civilized society. Portland government should not be carving out a special set of rules for any particular class of people. We need to start enforcing the laws already on our books as they're supposed to apply to the houseless and the housed equally.

Residents all over the city are feeling gas lit by the overly idealistic rhetoric spouted by our leaders. Rhetoric that flies in the face of the reality we as citizens live with daily. It is undeniably unsafe to live next to an unserved and unsanctioned houseless camp, whether you live in a tent or a house, both are in danger, both are vulnerable.

We may see Oregon elect a republican governor in part due to this overly idealistic rhetoric. As an example, Kotek's plan for the houseless doesn't include ending houselessness for young able bodied men, who disproportionately cause the issues we see on our streets. Therefore her plan doesn't seem to meaningfully address the crisis we're seeing on our streets. Continually denying the reality of your citizens is doing more harm than good to liberal and progressive causes. This is a failure of leadership, and it's evident at every level of city, county, state, and federal government.

Portland residents are rightfully upset because our elected public servants have not been listening to their valid concerns for years now. There is nothing compassionate about the status quo. There is nothing compassionate about permitting 700 distinct campsites to exist on public land with no services throughout our city. The city and county takes our tax money to provide services to the homeless and yet leaves them on the streets to simmer in filth, and to literally die on our curbs, all for fear of compelling them into services.

Is it wrong for the government to compel a camper to move from one location to another which is managed and has services? Would it be wrong for a parent to compel their children not to play in traffic? It is expected that both parents and government will at times compel other humans to do what is good for themselves and society. **It is literally the job of government to compel people to do what is right and lawful.**

There is nothing wrong with banning unmanaged public camping, and offering people an alternative location if they so choose. Under this plan nobody will not be losing the right to choose to go somewhere else. The Boise decision allows for this, Wheeler's policies against camping along busy roads and school routes is an obviously reasonable example of this. All public sidewalks and parks should be included in this ban.

Sanctioned campsites and car and RV parking areas are the only sane option for a small city such as ours to respond to this national issue. Time and time again the argument against sweeps are that the houseless have no where else to go, so give them somewhere to go, and compel them to take the offer with services. All you have to do is make those centralized rest areas and campsites nicer than the curbs on which most are currently resting their heads, surely we're up for that challenge?

- S
SE Portland Resident