



Date: 10/25/2022

Subject: Comments from Central City Concern on Resolutions 899-903

House keys end homelessness.

Central City Concern (CCC) appreciates the City's urgency to respond to the homeless crisis that is all too apparent in our community. We believe that any response must include strategies that will achieve lasting results for those facing extremely challenging circumstances. We are also concerned about the capacity for any health or social service provider to recruit staff to provide the necessary, co-located supportive services.

CCC supports a plan which expands permanent and temporary stabilization housing opportunities **combined** with an expansion of supportive employment, rent assistance **and** a permanent or renewed funding source to support the construction and pipeline of permanent, supportive deeply affordable housing.

With regard for Resolution 899 and the city's permitting operations, any efforts related to dramatically and rapidly improving the city permitting process related to development are strongly encouraged. We need to see a collaborative working space for the city to meet with nonprofit affordable housing developers who are owners, operators and service providers. We can't do this with one-off check-ins or individual feedback session, there must be consistent and on-going partners at the table with city staff identifying system level issues and solutions, and carrying on to see those solutions implemented.

We need a long-term funding plan. Our local affordable housing developers have exceeded our voter-approved goals for the City bond funded affordable housing production, and we're on track to do the same with the Metro affordable housing construction bond. We are building more housing than expected with bond dollars and we can't afford to have the Portland Housing Bureau development pipeline go dark, we must continue to build affordable housing every single year.

With regard for Resolutions 900 and 901, we agree that co-enrollment health and employment interventions should walk alongside housing. Access to peer support, health and behavioral healthcare and income attainment, keep people housed. Service coordination and housing placements must be part of any shelter or "sanctioned camp" strategy. When we review our internal data, we consistently see improved health and housing outcomes for people who are engaged in an employment intervention. The best outcome results come when people are connected to all three supports: housing, health care and employment.

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While increasing access to behavioral health services is not within the authority of the City, we appreciate local leaders calling on state agencies and elected officials to work with the same urgency to improve our health care system that the City wants to bring to improve our affordable housing system.

We must also acknowledge that today, we do not have enough behavioral health care providers to engage with people who are actively trying to access services, let alone those that in a pre-contemplative state of change. The [Sept '22 Oregon Alcohol and Drug Policy Commission report](#) indicated we are down 35,000 behavioral health workers of all stripes. That is a catastrophe.

CCC's Hooper Detox Center serves approximately 3,000 people each year, this is the single largest "front door" among all CCC's programs and has been highly successful in addressing substance use disorder for people experiencing homelessness. Unfortunately, we also turn away nearly 2,000 people each year because of capacity constraints. These are people who line-up at 7am wanting to start their journey of recovery; and even among those who are able to be enrolled, nearly 30% are released back to homelessness because there are not enough housing options.

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The metric that matters most is the number of people housed, and any plan that is going to be a good use of public funds should invest in housing development and housing placement supports and be able to show how many people are housed every month. We can spend money maintaining the status quo or spend money to house people.

At the time this letter was submitted, there was not enough information in Resolution 902 to provide direct feedback and Resolution 903 should be informed by the [Multnomah County Transforming Justice](#) process before it is acted upon. It may create a serious violation of the collective goals of the City, the County, and the large cohort of community members, Central City Concern included, who have been participating in that work in 2020. It is curious that the City cites the low service engagement results from Measure 110's violation ticket system, but then recommends in Resolution 903 to re-create the same system for people living outside. While on the other hand, service providers funded by Measure 110 grants have served over 16,000 people in its first 6-months completely outside the ticketing system. When services are readily available, low barrier and trauma informed people will engage.



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At Central City Concern we greatly support much of what is in Resolutions 899-901. Over 40 years of experience has told us that housing, health care and livable income are a foundational combination that can lead to long-term stability and wellness. We support the components of these resolutions that seek to achieve a co-enrollment in stable affordable housing, access to physical and behavioral health care and living-wage income attainment. We reject the notion that criminalization of homelessness or behavioral health conditions are part of any recipe for success. Making someone's living situation illegal will be counterproductive, all it does is punish people for the failures of our system, and that will inevitably prolong this crisis. In Resolution 901, former CEO Dr. Solotaroff's comments about individual factors and structural factors was mentioned; we highly encourage everyone to reviewing her full comments which go on to say, "that as those structural factors become more pronounced, "you need fewer and fewer, if any, of those individual factors to drive someone into homelessness and keep them there." The decisions City leaders make about what is legal vs illegal, and what services are welcoming and low-barrier vs punitive or where people have to prove they are "ready" or "worthy" will have a far greater determination on if we solve homelessness, than any one person's choices or circumstances.