

**From:** [Emily McCadden](#)  
**To:** [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** Written Testimony, 10/26 Agenda Item 899-903  
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My name is Emily McCadden. I'm a recent graduate of PSU's school of social work. I am one of six rider ambassadors providing support and doing outreach to people living outside as they navigate public transit. I also help run the Sunnyside Shower Project, providing hygiene resources for my neighbors living outside in the Sunnyside neighborhood where I live. I wholeheartedly oppose the creation of large "campuses" to house people living outside, especially when this strategy would be linked to criminalization of homelessness and would force people into jail if they refuse to go to one of these sites, as the Mayor's proposal does. As a student of social work, this proposal immediately reminded me of the history of forced relocation and incarceration of Japanese people during WWII. Social work scholar Yoosun Park's research has shined light on the role of social workers in coercing and disappearing the Japanese into these infamous encampments where they endured squalid, dehumanizing, and violent conditions. The use of outreach workers and social workers to manipulate and coerce people off of the streets and into camps or jail is a horrifying prospect but it is linked to a long legacy of state sponsored oppression against those who fall outside of the white supremacist, cisheteronormative, ableist, capitalist, and colonized hegemony.

The web of experiences and systems that lead people to live outside is complex. The people I meet in my professional and community work are very often dealing with poverty and disability. LGBTQ+ people and BIPOC are disproportionately represented among the houseless. Adverse childhood experiences and other traumas increase one's risk of houselessness. Furthermore, the bureaucracies with which people are forced to engage in order to meet their most basic needs are gatekept and confusing, involving scheduling and keeping appointments, access to transportation and technology, and requiring a seemingly endless string of documentation. Cookie cutter, one-size-fits-all solutions do not and will not work in ending houselessness. Forcing people to choose between a state-run campus and jail is a one-size-fits-all solution for those disgruntled by the sight of suffering, but it is not a solution for those experiencing suffering. People outside need individualized support and consistent follow-up, as demonstrated by a recent Street Roots poll showing that an overwhelming majority of folks outside have never been contacted by an outreach worker, and of those that had, most of them never heard from them again.

Creative solutions that support people where they're at are needed and community members across Portland have already been building this kind of support in their neighborhoods. My neighbors in Sunnyside started the Sunnyside Shower Project when our neighbors living outside said they needed a clean place in the neighborhood to meet their hygiene needs. Other neighbors consistently provide trash removal services on a volunteer basis, working alongside the people living on the streets in our neighborhood (something that city council has been resistant to invest in). We've also advocated for more and better servicing of port-a-potties, and have funded them ourselves when the city refused. Investing in options that meet people where they are could look like supporting these community-run efforts. Unfortunately when our group came before city council in May to ask for financial support during the budget hearing, we did not receive funding. Instead of investing in work already being done on the ground in partnership with the city's most targeted and vulnerable, Mayor Wheeler continues to push the agenda of wealthy Pearl District residents, tourists, and unsympathetic business owners by attempting to disappear people living outside to internment camps and jails to make

the complex problems they face less visible to these constituents.

Support communities that are already solving their own problems. Invest resources in giving people many options for treatment, housing, financial assistance, employment, education, and navigating social services. When people and communities have their needs met, many of the problems that our city is facing will be lessened. Disappearing people who have been deemed problematic outsiders does nothing but perpetuate these problems.

Thanks for your consideration,  
Emily McCadden, MSW