

From: [Haley Atherton](#)
To: [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)
Subject: Public Testimony Resolution regarding 899-903
Date: Wednesday, October 26, 2022 11:32:47 AM

To Mayor Wheeler and City Commissioners Ryan, Mapps, Rubio, and Hardesty:

My name is Haley Atherton, LCSW and I'm writing to express my concerns about resolutions 899-903. As a community member, an ally of our community members who live unhoused, a clinical social worker in the health care system and concerned citizen I ask you to hear my concerns.

The devastating reality of homelessness in our city is a humanitarian crisis. Our unhoused neighbors deserve swift action to direct resources towards solutions. However, I'm very concerned about the policy resolutions that have been brought forward. These resolutions are aimed at increasing affordable housing, providing supportive social services and removing barriers to housing, which are goals I also support, but the strategy and mechanism to advance these goals will undeniably cause harm to unhoused individuals.

1. Further criminalization and civil or criminal punishment of individuals experiencing houselessness will not be supportive of the goals the city has outlined with this plan.
2. Congregate shelter settings are not accessible and/or safe for many individuals who lack housing. The proposed scale of each concentrated "campus" cannot possibly be trauma informed or honor the dignity of each resident. There are significant public health risks in settings this large, including outbreaks of communicable diseases like COVID and hMPXV ("Monkey Pox"). The negative impacts on the physical and mental health of residents will further exacerbate the severe health disparities unhoused people experience.
3. Mandating people to enter these "campuses" or face criminal punishment will create further distrust in our local government and law enforcement. We can expect to see a significant drop in engagement with our social safety net, causing increased pressure on the infrastructure of other systems like hospitals and public health, which are already strained to their breaking point.
4. Enforcing these mandates and staffing these "campuses" will be extremely expensive. Our taxpayers have already made recent significant investments in the development of affordable housing (M26-210) and substance use disorder treatment (M110). These proposed resolutions will distract and pull resources away from these efforts that are creating positive impacts this very moment.
5. Finally, shelter is not a solution to our housing crisis. While these resolutions call for immediate action to create more affordable housing units, the proposed entry point to these services is inhumane. More people will be facing eviction this month than any other time in the history of the city. The increased cap on rent increases to nearly 15%,

along with the end of 10-day eviction protections will cause an imminent wave of people becoming homeless.

Please withdraw these resolutions and engage the community in creating solutions that respect the dignity, humanity and self-determination of our houseless neighbors.

Sincerely,
Haley Atherton, LCSW