

**From:** [Debra Porta](#)  
**To:** [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** Public Testimony Regarding Agenda Item 899-903  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 26, 2022 12:00:27 PM

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My name is Debra Porta, Executive Director for Pride Northwest, Inc. I am on the testimony list for today but want to ensure that my comments are included in case they don't get to me.

Mayor Wheeler, Commissioners, my name is Debra Porta, Executive Director for Pride Northwest and I am here to express major concerns regarding much of Item 899-903.

There is much that I could say regarding what I have witnessed and experienced over the last almost three years and why nothing about the current proposals from Portland City Council leads me to believe that my community, Portland's LGBTQIA2S+ community, will be well-served much less ever heard on this matter, by the current proposals as written. Decades of research and evidence have long made clear that large-scale, general population shelters do not work for unhoused LGBTQIA2S+ people and are often downright dangerous and harmful. Despite the overrepresentation of LGBTQIA2S+ people in unhoused populations, service providers are often under-prepared, to put it kindly, to work with unhoused LGBTQIA2S+ people. This isn't hidden information-it is readily available, if you choose to look. Day after day, month after month, year after year, I watch our people on the ground and am also called upon, to fill the gaps in need left by a system that ignores us and by agencies that have no knowledge (or inclination to learn) about the unique needs and obstacles faced by LGBTQIA2S+ people who are unhoused, but who then well-resourced and put in charge of our people. I see, in real time, the very real harm and trauma that is consistently meted out through these kinds of structures and processes. Now, I don't claim to know every queer in Portland. But I am deeply troubled and very aware of the fact that I don't know a single person who was reached out to and engaged in drafting these proposals, at any stage in their development. And no, electeds and city staff don't count as being the voice of our community. The power differential there cannot be ignored.

No one disagrees that bold action is needed-and has been needed. But the very real and concrete harm embedded in this current slate of proposals is unacceptable. And before someone pegs me as a "No to everything person" know that you would be incorrect-that is not what should be taken away from my comments. What should be clear-and what I am saying unequivocally, is I implore our city's leaders to do what they have not yet done-and that is INCLUDE us in decisions that have such far-reaching implications for us. To not do so flies in the face of the City's own stated values.

Thank you.

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*The mission of Pride Northwest, Inc. is to encourage and celebrate the positive diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans communities, and to assist in the education of all people through the development of activities that showcase the history, accomplishments, and talents of these communities.*