



## SENATE

### **Portland City Council**

1221 SW 4th Ave #110

Portland, OR

97204

Dear Mayor Wheeler and Commissioners Ryan, Mapps, Rubio, and Hardesty

For the record my name is Akasha Lawrence Spence and I have the privilege of serving Northwest and Southwest Portland and the City of Tigard as the State Senator for District 18. I am writing today in **strong opposition to the housing proposals submitted by Mayor Wheeler and Commissioner Ryan and to amplify the calls of Street Roots, Blanchet House, Ground Score Association, JOIN, Impact NW, Northwest Pilot Project, Oregon Kids Read, Our Just Future, Portland State University Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative, p:ear, Rose Haven, Sisters of the Road, AfroVillage PDX, Urban League PDX and Welcome Home Coalition and Street Books, for City Council to meaningfully engage with houseless people on housing policy at the Town Hall.**

Access to stable and permanent housing is vital to the health and stability of every person in our community. The intersection of past racist housing policy, unequal economic development opportunities, and the overall lack of supportive services, has placed more and more Portlanders on the margins. Homelessness is a symptom of a larger problem of disinvestment that began long before your tenure as electeds, but you have a unique opportunity to put forward community based long term solutions that will heal our city and uplift the most vulnerable amongst us.

Equitable and sustainable long term housing policies are inclusive of the communities it serves. It brings folks to the table, those who are houseless and disproportionately BIPOC, disabled, or suffering with mental illness and, all too often at the intersection of all four. It asks the advocates who are on the ground working with them and servicing them to bring their experience and solutions to the table. It looks like a plan that is comprehensive and holistic, a plan that does not simply remove members of our community from our field of vision and sequester them into organized camps, plans we have seen fail in countless municipalities across the country. It instead looks like working with landlords and developers to produce vouchers to get folks into empty units, it looks



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like doing more to expedite and shore up those creating affordable housing within our city. It looks like ensuring our houseless communities have adequate access to healthcare, behavioral health services, employment assistance, and basic necessities like laundry, showers and restrooms.

**We are at a vital time in our city, we *must* engage with houseless Portlanders who are here today saying let us help you support our needs, give us a chance to partner in the deep community work necessary to implement a vision that works for them, and in doing so will work for our entire city.** Engaging with houseless Portlanders is one way to ensure communities are housed, acknowledge and heal the past traumas of sweeps, systemic racism and the institutional inequities exacerbated by short term solutions that lead to costly and insufficient results.

Thank you for your time, I not only encourage a no vote on the proposed resolutions, but I hope to see a counter resolution that states your commitment to forging a new plan with those most impacted at the center of vetted community and evidence based solutions.

In solidarity,

### **State Senator Akasha Lawrence Spence**

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