

From: [Scotti Warren](#)
To: [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)
Subject: Testimony regarding resolutions 899-903
Date: Wednesday, October 26, 2022 1:24:09 PM

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

My name is Scotti Warren and I am writing to express my concerns about resolutions 899-903. I am a clinical outreach social worker and I have been doing street outreach in the City of Portland for 11 years. It is obvious that city council is concerned about the ongoing humanitarian crisis of homelessness in our city and I agree that resolutions to increase affordable housing, provide supportive social services and remove barriers to housing are all necessary and should remain top priority. However, I am concerned that the strategies recommended to advance these goals will cause ongoing harm to our neighbors without homes.

Your resolutions site data that seem to indicate that thousands of shelter beds are offered and few people accept them, instead choosing to remain in unsanctioned sites that are constantly at risk of being swept. This is contrary to my on the ground experience, in which it is very difficult to get shelter beds for people who are actively seeking them. It involves multiple referrals and calling daily to check availability and often takes many weeks to finally access. This is not to mention the extreme lack of access to treatment for mental health and substance use, which takes months to get in to.

Furthermore, we know that congregate shelters are simply not safe or accessible for all people experiencing homelessness and the proposal to force people to concentrated “campuses” is not trauma informed nor does it honor the dignity of each resident trying to survive on the streets. Further criminalizing homelessness sets people up for a cascade of negative outcomes and it will not “incentivize” people to access services that simply are not available, even with the assistance and advocacy of highly trained professionals who are well-versed in service navigation and spend 40+ hours per week attempting to do just that.

The concept of “campuses” reminds me of an approach I witnessed in Phoenix, AZ, where I lived and did street outreach from July 2021-July 2022. “The Zone” in Phoenix was described as an alternative to unsanctioned camps in an LA Times article about homelessness in Portland on June 21, 2022 and was said to have hygiene, food and medical services provided to residents. However, speaking with people who actually live in the Zone and the outreach workers trying to provide life-sustaining services to people there will tell you this is simply not true. The Zone is a dangerous place and is heavily policed to actively deter service provision; the police even created a barricade to block meals from being provided within the Zone on Thanksgiving last year. 500 people experiencing homelessness have died in Phoenix in just the first half of this year. This not an example of a policy that works.

We need to continue having multiple options for people experiencing and exiting homelessness. We have not even seen how the community will receive and utilize the safe rest sites, so it seems unfair to automatically require “campuses” for all. While working on creative and evidence based solutions, we must not lose sight of the voices that are most important in all of this: those with lived and living experience. Without their active involvement in solutions, we are left with policies that rely on force by criminal punishment and further distrust in our local government and law enforcement.

Thank you,

Scotti Warren, LCSW, CADC III, MPH

She/Her ([Learn more](#))

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