

From: [Dana Buhl](#)
To: [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)
Subject: Item 901
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This is the written version of what I presented yesterday at the City Council Hearing on Mayor Wheeler and Commissioner Ryan's proposed plan to end homelessness. My testimony focused on Item 901.

Before you start my time, I'd like to make a procedural comment. As someone who waited hours to testify, I am disappointed to hear that Commissioner Ryan paved the way for certain interests over others. Please put this into the record.

Beginning of testimony:

I'm Dana Buhl (she/her), Director of Social Justice at First Unitarian Church in downtown Portland and a volunteer at the Sunnyside Showers Project.

As Unitarian Universalists, our faith Principles center the inherent worth and dignity of every person; justice, equity and compassion in human relations; and, we have a faithful commitment to dismantle systems of oppression.

While we are glad to see in this proposal an urgent commitment to building more affordable housing and removing barriers to accessing housing, we also have serious concerns.

We are concerned that Item 901 that will force unhoused people under the threat of arrest into mass shelters and/or mass camping will deepen the human crisis further. Mass shelters are unable to provide the level of services that people need. There's a reason people don't choose them, as they are traumatizing and dehumanizing. Rather than supporting human dignity, they decrease peoples' capacity to create stability in their lives.

The short-sighted plan of building mass shelters and mass campsites is

not only inhumane and ineffective for solving the problem, it increases the reliance on law enforcement and judicial systems. How soon will we be asked to pay for building more jail cells? These systems criminalize poor people rather than address systemic causes and solutions.

We believe that the people who are closest to the human crisis of homelessness – meaning unhoused and formerly unhoused people, those on the brink of losing housing, as well as the people who have been working effectively in coalition as providers – need to be part of creating the plans. In the last year in the county, 4,500 people were supported into permanent housing. These are sustainable programs and those who have been implementing them should be part of creating the solution alongside our unhoused and previously unhoused neighbors.

City Commissioners, Mayor, we ask you to prioritize solutions that center the humanity of those most marginalized, and include the people most impacted in the developments and implementation of city plans. Please envision the end-goal where every Portlander has a healthy and safe home and no one is condemned for being poor, disabled or drug-dependent.

Thank you.

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