

HOUSING EMERGENCY DECLARATION

IF YOU WISH TO SPEAK TO CITY COUNCIL, PRINT YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, AND EMAIL.

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Please sign up for only one

Agenda Item 1029-1030

TESTIMONY

2:00 PM TIME CERTAIN

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From: Allan Lazo <alazo@lazoconsulting.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 07, 2015 11:34 AM
To: Council Clerk – Testimony
Cc: Hales, Mayor; Commissioner Saltzman; Commissioner Fish; Commissioner Fritz; Commissioner Novick; Finn, Brendan; Callahan, Shannon; Alpert, Josh; Detweiler, Jillian; Chabre Vickers; James, Dante; Selby, Jeff
Subject: Submitted testimony on 10-07-15 City Council Agenda Items #1029 and #1030: "Declare a housing emergency"
Attachments: 2015-10-05 HRTF statement on housing emergency.pdf

To Whom It May Concern:

Please find attached submitted testimony on City Council agenda items #1029 and #1030 from the Portland Human Rights Commission's Housing Rights Task Force.

Please feel free to contact me should you have questions or need additional information about our testimony. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Allan Lazo, Chair, Housing Rights Task Force
Portland Human Rights Commission
cel: 503-201-5417

UN Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services."

To: **Portland City Council**

From: **Housing Rights Task Force of the Portland Human Rights Commission**

Date: Oct. 7, 2015

RE: City Council Agenda Items #1029 and #1030: "Declare a housing emergency"

**Portland Human Rights Commission's Housing Rights Task Force
Commends City Council Efforts Regarding Housing Emergency;
Challenges Council Members to Take Expansive View**

As Portland City Commissioners consider a resolution to declare a housing state of emergency, the Housing Task Force (HRTF) of the Portland Human Rights Commission both commends members of City Council for making housing a priority and also challenges those members, as the Street Roots editorial board urged, "to be bold" in the wide-ranging actions necessary to adequately resolve our community's housing crisis.

While the Council's bold step of declaring a housing emergency will bring much needed focus to the issues of housing in Portland over the next year, how we define this emergency will shape our response to this dire situation; and as a community, we must go beyond defining our housing emergency as addressing homelessness.

The Mayor's proposed ordinances amending the City's Emergency Code (item #1029) and subsequent declaration of a housing emergency (item #1030) before the City Council on October 7 focus on efforts to site shelters and day-use storage for those currently experiencing homelessness. These measures will begin a process of honoring the human rights of the thousands that sleep on our streets each night. But our current housing emergency goes well beyond the 2,869 people identified as "literally homeless" in the January 2015 point-in-time homelessness count by Multnomah County.

As a city and as a community, we must acknowledge and accept that reducing the number of those sleeping on the street on any given night and providing an adequate supply of affordable housing in our region are mutually inclusive goals in this housing emergency.

To employ a natural disaster analogy (such as a storm event) to our current housing emergency, we would be ignoring the need to shore up our infrastructure in the face of an emergency if we did not seize this opportunity to also focus on building and maintaining long-term, stable affordable housing stock in our community.

As such, the Portland Human Rights Commission's Housing Rights Task Force urges the Portland City Council to consider strengthening language around ending the affordable housing emergency in the proposed ordinances. As an example, we encourage City Council to expand

item 6 in the findings section of the Ordinance to Amend Title 15, Emergency Code (item #1029) to include reviewing and amending the zoning code to "remove barriers to efficient and cost-effective development of long-term affordable housing in the city of Portland."

Similarly, we encourage the Portland City Council to revise the verbiage in the ordinance declaring a housing emergency (item #1030), under the Council directs section, item a. to include a stronger reference to affordable housing as follows: "There is a state of emergency presented by the homeless and housing affordability situation throughout the City of Portland, requiring declaration of a housing emergency Portland City Code Title 15 for the entire City."

The mission of the HRTF is to define and support the aspirational statement: "Housing is a Human Right." This fundamental human right to housing is embodied in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services."

While we recognize local and state jurisdictions serving Portland and our surrounding communities are not charged with providing housing for all members of our community as a social program, we believe this aspirational statement compels action by the City of Portland and other jurisdictions in the following areas:

- Building and maintaining affordable housing
- Preserving and protecting our neighborhoods and housing choice
- Addressing homelessness, with specific focus on families, veterans and those with supportive needs

The Portland City Council has undertaken several commendable efforts as this housing crisis has reached emergency proportions, including recent efforts to increase outreach to those experiencing homelessness, especially veterans, women and families on the street; upcoming proposals to increase renter protections for no-cause evictions and rent increases; and efforts to find a permanent home for the Right to Dream Too camp. Discussions also appear to be underway around demolition taxes and revisiting the allocation of short-term rental taxes.

There also have been numerous community-led efforts around bringing forward anti-displacement measures in the new comprehensive plan; further protecting renters from no-cause evictions and rent increases; and identifying a local, permanent source of funding for affordable housing.

These efforts by City Council in concert with the many determined efforts in our community, signal to us a critical mass of political will and grassroots support to end this housing crisis, and we should seize upon this opportunity for bold, far-reaching solutions that address this complex, multi-faceted emergency.

The HRTF supports the City Council's call for a one-year housing emergency period and further urges City Council members to consider the following recommendations in key housing areas during the one-year housing emergency period:

- *Addressing homelessness:*
 - Evaluate city ordinances, regulations and practices that criminalize activities of those experiencing homelessness, such as the City's camping ban and sidewalk management plan practices.

- *Building and Maintaining Affordable Housing:*
 - Review opportunities under Title 33 to simplify and accelerate the permitting process for builders of affordable housing;
 - Identify opportunities to create a new local, permanent source of funding for affordable housing.

- *Preserving and Protecting Our Neighborhoods and Housing Choice:*
 - Review opportunities to increase renter protections related to no-cause evictions and rent increases;
 - Require new developments to conduct impact analyses on housing affordability in neighborhoods;
 - Review potential to capture increased value created by neighborhood development to fund efforts to keep people in their neighborhoods, as recommended by the Anti-Displacement PDX Coalition in the Comprehensive Plan update.

The Portland Human Rights Commission's Housing Rights Task Force believe this declaration of a housing emergency presents our city's and our community's best opportunity to seize the moral authority embodied in the statement that "Housing is a Human Right" and to work toward feasible, collaborative, and long-term solutions to this untenable crisis of conscious.

Respectfully submitted,



Allan Lazo, Chair
Housing Rights Task Force
of the Portland Human Rights Commission