



NORTHEAST COALITION
OF NEIGHBORHOODS

February 19, 2020

RE: Testimony on the proposed resolution to fund homeless services

Dear Metro Councilors,

I am writing on behalf of the Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods board of directors regarding the proposed resolution on funding homeless services that you are considering. Specifically, ***we are asking you to include a provision that will sunset the proposed 1% tax in ten years or less.***

As a coalition that represents more than 60,000 neighbors in an area of Portland that has been historically underserved and continues to be heavily impacted by gentrification, addressing housing affordability and homelessness is a top priority for NECN. We count many homeless residents among our neighbors and have worked with neighborhoods and stakeholders to welcome the Walnut Park shelter at Killingworth and MLK—and continue to work in support of this needed resource. This is just one example of our commitment our neighbors experiencing homelessness.

We strongly support adequately funding efforts to prevent and address homelessness, ***however, we do not believe a tax in perpetuity is appropriate way to fund an “emergency.” We oppose a resolution without a sunset provision regardless of who the tax targets.***

An emergency is defined as a serious, unexpected and often dangerous situation requiring immediate action. While the *urgent needs* of our neighbors experiencing homelessness are serious and necessitate action, homelessness and housing affordability are systemic issues. To address systemic issues NECN supports 1. Structural changes through policy that improves housing availability and affordability 2. Improving the effectiveness of existing programs—of which there are many and 3. Raising revenue to expand effective programs/ supports such as those administered through the Joint Office. Increasing funding alone does not ensure better outcomes and livability for all residents of the greater Portland area.

We are concerned that rapidly pushing through a ballot measure to voters that establishes a new tax with no provisions for reevaluation of the need ***does not provide accountability to voters*** and is more likely to fail. The foreshortened timeline has also limited outreach and community input from stakeholders.

Voters should have the ability to reconsider a tax that is meant to address urgent needs in a few years. It may be the need for funding for systemic aspects of homelessness will continue, but voters deserve the right to evaluate the outcomes of programs funded by the tax and determine whether funds are being spent in an appropriate and effective manner. Please incorporate a sunset provision to ensure accountability to voters and the communities you serve.

Sincerely,

Mariah Dula
President of the Board
Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods