

Hello. Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony today. I wish I could be there, but Tuesday is the day that I distribute supplies to houseless people under the Steel Bridge in Northwest Portland. I wish I could take a day off from what I do, but I can't. People rely on me. These people have had their belongings taken from them over and over and over again. They come back to me week after week with the same needs because they were swept or someone stole from them who was swept or their friend needs help because they were swept, and so on. It's heartbreaking and absurd, and more than anything it must stop.

I moved here in the 2000s, got my master's degree from PSU, and own my home in the Creston-Kenilworth neighborhood of Southeast Portland. Please understand that I am a Portlander through and through. I love this city, and I firmly believe that what makes Portland amazing is our community. Our neighborly values. Camaraderie. And I don't frankly care if someone owns property here, because every person in this city has so much value in regards to what makes Portland amazing.

And this brings me to the point of sweeps. I do not understand what they are attempting to accomplish. Whatever it is, I can attest that it is NOT being accomplished. There is no purpose, no reason to be displacing people over and over and over again. These people have trauma and are being forced to relive it on repeat. Not only that, sweeps are forcing Portlanders to care for these displaced individuals on a daily basis. I can attest that I am exhausted from the effort, and I know that I am not alone. Sweeps are draining so much energy from so many echelons of people in this city. We are the people of Portland, and we are tired of this childish shuffle.

As someone who feels compassion for my houseless neighbors, I am constantly working to ensure they are fed and have water, supplies, clothing, and dignity. Because of sweeps I have to take supplies from individuals, community organizations, and the government repeatedly simply to replace the supplies that individuals, organizations, and the government gave people already. Sweeps are costing everyone so much money. From funding rapid response to all the organizations that are replacing supplies through JOHS to literally thousands of dollars in donations from the people of Portland to purchase replacement items, sweeps and their repercussions are an insanely expensive undertaking.

And the bottom line is that sweeps are not helping anyone. I need to say that again, sweeps are not helping anyone. And I ask you to consider: To what end? What is the point? People still need a place to sleep. People still need a place to store their belongings. We are all human. We all need to feel safe. And by upsetting the basic structure of a human's needs, sweeps are hurting both the people that are being swept and the people who live in the community throughout which they are being swept.

The concept of sweeping is so demeaning. But it's also nonsensical. Because if you're sweeping something, you're just moving it from one place to another. You can't push dirt around a room until it disappears and pretend to be productive, and you certainly can't push humans around a city until they disappear and pretend to be humane. We need real solutions, and those solutions start with stability and sanctity for all of the people of Portland.

And with that I beg you, please stop the sweeps.