

Communication from Public

Name: SV

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Council File No: 20-1376-S4

Comments for Public Posting: I am writing to oppose this motion. It is a shortsighted attempt to once again pass off decades of failures by the city on to people without the power or resources to change their circumstances. I am disgusted by the claim that this motion is “holding space” for any of the reasons that people refuse shelter. I have met a 76 year old woman suffering from heart disease who had been assaulted and robbed in a congregate shelter, who did not want to go back to another. I have met multiple veterans who refused shelter. Some suffered from PTSD and needed more quiet than the shelter offered, or had a service animal they were asked to part with. I met a young woman who said she tried shelter but left when she realized she’d had more privacy in jail. I met so many couples that want to stay together, some of whom have been told that they are on years-long waitlists for that possibility. I have met people with claustrophobia or with cancer (and who would have to take several buses to get to doctors or chemotherapy). I have met people who have suffered unimaginable traumas, who want to feel safe and secure in a way they don’t believe they could in a shelter. Most commonly, every person I know that has said no to shelter, has said yes before, only to end up back outdoors. How many times must a person say yes before they can get permanent housing? There is no space in this motion for the people who have tried and for whom the system failed. There is no space for peoples’ suffering, experiences, or needs. There is neither compassion nor thoughtfulness. For anyone who put forward something so ignorant and heartless, I cannot imagine how little space you have held for peoples’ stories when a mere occasional volunteer like me has heard so many. What does it mean to hold space for peoples’ reasons, if this motion would reject every single reason out of hand? Acknowledging legitimate reasons may exist for what you admit is a small minority of people to reject interim housing, then punishing them for those legitimate reasons is not only heartless, it does nothing to solve homelessness. I’d say you should be ashamed of yourselves, but I can’t imagine anyone capable of feeling shame could put their names to a motion like this. There are a thousand common sense approaches you skipped over to get here. Start there.