

Commissioner Fish Opening Statement
Supportive Housing Resolution
October 18, 2017

I am proud to co-sponsor this resolution with Mayor Wheeler and Commissioner Eudaly.

It builds on a history of strong partnerships – with the County, Home Forward, and community non-profits. Today we have yet another opportunity to come together, to set a bold vision, and to get the job done!

We've shown that when we link arms we can make progress: 11x13—preserving at risk affordable homes, Operation 305—working to end veterans' homelessness, and creating the Joint Office of Homeless Services.

Mayor, I am proud to be part of this Council, which has already taken important steps to address our housing crisis: opening new shelter beds, extending the housing state of emergency, enacting historic renter protections, and making significant new investments in the Joint Office.

Today's action is another important step forward.

We're having a big community conversation about homelessness—and the increase in very vulnerable people living outside. The most recent Point-in-Time count showed that while more people are moving from the streets to shelter, chronic homelessness is up.

About 2/3 of the people living on our streets reported a mental illness, an addiction, or both.

Chronically homeless women and men are the hardest to house, face the biggest barriers, and are at greatest risk of dying on our streets. And they are caught in a costly, inefficient, and failed system.

What have we learned?

That for many people, a roof over their head is not enough. They also need intensive services that address their other life challenges, including mental illness and addiction.

That's where supportive housing comes in—deeply affordable and safe homes paired with intensive services.

Today, we acknowledge the successes we've achieved together this past year – helping thousands of people move into housing or stay in their homes. And we are poised to make a new and timely commitment to our most vulnerable residents.

The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) has identified a need for 2,800 new units of supportive housing. The Resolution before Council calls for 2,000 new units of supportive housing over the next decade. It's not enough – and it won't solve the housing crisis.

But it will make a difference in the lives of people we serve.

To craft and then advance this vision, we have assembled the “A Team” – the City of Portland, Multnomah County, the City/County Joint Office of Homeless Services, Home Forward, the State of Oregon, CSH, and community partners.

The Resolution directs our partners to come together and develop a roadmap for accomplishing our goal. That includes the existing and new resources to fund the services.

I want to thank Chair Kafoury and Commissioner Meieran for their leadership at the County, Mayor Wheeler and Commissioner Eudaly for their partnership and support of this proposal, Marc Jolin and the Joint Office for helping us to shape the vision, Heather Lyons and CSH for providing technical support and pushing us to be bold, and Rachel Solotaroff and Central City Concern for hosting the PSH summit in September – which brought key leaders together to refine our vision.