



**Commissioner Nick Fish**  
City of Portland

August 8, 2017

Affordable Housing Bond Stakeholder Advisory Group  
c/o Jennifer Chang  
Portland Housing Bureau  
421 SW 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 500  
Portland, OR 97204

RE: Permanent Supportive Housing

Dear Committee Members:

I write to you as a member of the Portland City Council, a former Housing Commissioner, and a strong supporter of the housing bond.

I urge you to accept the recommendation of A Home for Everyone's coordinating board and others to use this new resource to invest in at least 300 units of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH).

The Center for Supportive Housing reported earlier this year that Portland is short approximately 1,800 units of PSH. In the most recent Point-In-Time Count, more than 70% of unsheltered respondents self-reported suffering from an addiction, a mental illness, or both.

This past winter, Karen Batts, a mentally ill woman, died of hypothermia in a downtown garage. She was discovered in the shadow of a homeless shelter that had an available bed for her. But it was a bed she would never occupy. She and hundreds of other people on our streets struggling with addiction and mental illness need safe, affordable homes coupled with intensive services.

The City, Multnomah County, the State of Oregon, Home Forward, and our community partners have a collective responsibility to close the PSH gap with every available resource, including this bond.

Permanent supportive housing has a proven track record locally and nationally. And it is cost-effective. The current system of addressing the needs of our most vulnerable is unsustainable and unacceptable: police officers serving as social workers, ambulances providing public transportation, emergency room doctors delivering primary care, prison beds occupied by nonviolent people in crisis.

In November 2016, Portland voters overwhelmingly supported a historic housing bond. At the same time, the City and the County have increased our collective investments in housing, shelter, renter protections, and services. The time has come to boost our investment in PSH as well.

You have been tasked with the responsibility of recommending the highest and best use of precious public resources. I hope that you will use this opportunity to close a glaring gap in our system – and address a persistent crisis on our streets.

Let me be clear: our community will not solve the housing crisis without a significant investment in PSH. That is why I am encouraging you to accept the recommendation of A Home for Everyone's coordinating board, County Chair Deborah Kafoury, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, and other community leaders, that we invest in this vital tool.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service.

Sincerely,



Nick Fish  
Portland City Commissioner

CC: Mayor Ted Wheeler  
Commissioner Amanda Fritz  
Commissioner Chloe Eudaly  
Commissioner Dan Saltzman  
County Chair Deborah Kafoury  
1221 SW Fourth Avenue, Room 240 ♦ Portland, Oregon 97204-1998  
(503) 823-3589 ♦ FAX (503) 823-3596 ♦ TDD (503) 823-6868 ♦ nick@portlandoregon.gov