



American Friends Service Committee

Quaker values in action



Planned Parenthood Columbia Willamette



Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

November 22, 2019

Mayor Chuck Bennett & Salem City Council  
555 Liberty St SE RM 220  
Salem OR 97301

Dear Mayor Bennett and City Councilors,

As a group of non-profit and volunteer organizations working to support a safe and thriving community in Salem, we are respectfully submitting this letter to City Council in opposition to the proposed “sit-lie” ordinance. The increasing population of community members experiencing homelessness in Salem, is evidence of the current public safety and public health crisis we are facing. With the current state of lacking affordable housing, access to social services, use of restrooms or places to rest, we know that pushing people out of our public spaces and out of sight, is not a real solution.

The draft ordinance before council will force people out of the city’s public spaces, and yet the city’s website says the policy is “not directed at preserving physical pedestrian access or public safety.” With so little assurance that this policy would improve the livability in Salem, accompanied by the statement that the ordinance isn’t meant to improve safety, we question the motives behind this reactionary policy. Our agencies work to promote safe and healthy communities for people of all ages, races, disabilities and income-levels, starting with addressing basic needs like access to housing, education, social services and safe transportation options. This ordinance steepens the uphill battle that vulnerable communities already face in getting their basic needs met, and it pushes them further outside of the greater community.

We believe that public spaces are meant for all community members, including our most vulnerable who are living outdoors. We call on City Council to commit to finding real solutions for affordable housing and social services, and we look forward to supporting meaningful action. Thank you for your service to the Salem Community, and for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

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