



The Law Office of Amanda A. Meader

To: Joint Housing Committee
From: Amanda A. Meader, Esq.
DATE: April 4, 2023
SUBJECT: LD 2

I write in support of LD 2. I am a family member who has witnessed firsthand the value of the “Housing First” model.

Born and raised in Fairfield, I put myself through Bates College on scholarship (Phi Beta Kappa, Magna Cum Laude), went directly to Cornell Law School upon graduation, and have been a practicing attorney since 2004. After working with one of Portland’s largest law firms, and then a non-profit, I now run my own law firm, specializing in municipal law. Even now, at the age of 44, I cannot speak about my father without crying, thus the written testimony in lieu of an in-person appearance.

My father was a hard-working and talented carpenter, a kind-hearted neighbor and friend, and a man who deeply loved his wife and three children. He also drank to self-medicate depression, anxiety, and the PTSD of having a violent alcoholic father.

I was 9 when I first realized that my Dad was being eaten alive by the monster of addiction. By age 16, my parents had divorced after 20 years of marriage, his drinking having made our home no longer a safe space. After couch surfing a bit, he eventually took to the streets. Contact with him was sporadic over the next decade, and of decreasing frequency. At one point I had not seen my father in five years. I had not heard from him in three.

I discovered he was in Portland when I heard a radio news story about increasing violence against the homeless. I heard a man who went by “Z” speak of being stabbed in the back while sleeping under the Casco Bay bridge. I knew that my father went by “Z,” but hoped that I had misheard or misunderstood. I had not.

On March 24, 2005, Avesta Housing and Preble Street Resource Center opened Logan Place, Portland’s first efficiency apartment building dedicated to housing chronically homeless adults. Several months later, my siblings and I partnered with Preble Street and the miraculous Donna Yellen to move my father off the streets and into his own “house.”

Knowing that my father had a place to live meant that in the winter, when the temperatures dipped below zero, I knew he was warm.

It meant that I knew where to find him, so I could send him letters and visit.

It meant that he had reliable access to a telephone and could call his children.

It meant that he was eating more and walking better.

It meant that he had a bed. And a toilet. And a shower. He had a home to go to, instead of a home that he carried in a knapsack.

And it meant that my siblings and I were able to visit, and sometimes, just for a moment, when we laughed at something funny my father had said, we were able to feel young and safe again.

We've all had, or will have, heavy sorrows in our lives. One of my heaviest sorrows is the loss of my father to untreated mental illness and alcoholism. Beloved by many and helped by countless, he still lost his battle at age 58. On July 30, 2011, he died alone in his "home."

And then I received the phone call that I had known for years would be coming.

Let us give those among us who are struggling a chance at a better life. Give them the dignity of a roof over their heads, rather than stare past and through them as we rush about with our "important" lives. I urge you to vote in favor of LD 2.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amanda A. Meader".

Amanda A. Meader