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QuickPoint! – Missing from Mayor Wheeler’s Homelessness Program: Long-Term Independence

By Rachel Dawson

Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. This age-old saying seems to be lost on Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler, [who just announced a \\$12 million pilot program](#) to fund 50 units paired with mental health services and addiction treatment for the chronically homeless.

However, this program will have little effect on [the homeless crisis in Multnomah County](#), where 4,177 people are homeless. At 50 units, only 0.01% of them will be helped.

This program may give the chronically homeless a roof over their heads, but it will not lift them from poverty. They will remain dependent on that unit and treatment indefinitely.

So, if throwing money at the homeless problem won’t solve it, what will?

A New York private charity known as the Doe Fund may have the answer. This organization gives food and shelter to the homeless in exchange for work at partnering profit-generating businesses like street cleaning and pest control. The Doe Fund teaches the homeless to fish rather than just giving them one.

This Portland pilot program will not help make the homeless independent or increase their economic mobility. Instead, we should be giving them “a hand up, not a hand out.”

Rachel Dawson is Research Associate at Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon’s free market public policy research organization.