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QuickPoint! – Homeless Programs are Promising Excuses

By Vlad Yurlov

The Portland region's top homelessness officials delivered another set of promises and excuses in a statement last Thursday.

Instead of cutting off funds to failed approaches, our policymakers promise to “permanently end homelessness” with another \$1 billion over ten years. In the same breath, they blame untreated mental health and substance abuse disorders for the homelessness crisis, the very thing their programs failed to do.

These are the direct results of programs that promised to “end” homelessness with a “Housing First” approach since 2005. A Housing First approach believes that homelessness can be solved by simply keeping people in some sort of supportive housing with no requirement that any of the support services are used. Unfortunately, the people who are most in need of treatment are also the most resistant to being treated.

You can see that the Housing First approach failed, because as homeless services budgets tripled, the streets are more hazardous, the sidewalks are increasingly impassable, and the total number of homeless isn't decreasing.

Our public programs do everything but require harmful problems to be solved. And our public officials intend to keep pouring money into this failed approach, so it's time to demand that your dollars go to those who want help.

Vlad Yurlov is a Policy Analyst at Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon's free market public policy research center.