

Testimony for City Council Bill 7

We need to help the homeless find appropriate shelter and accommodations, but not on our sidewalks. As a senior citizen living in Chinatown, I have almost fallen due to the many individuals sleeping and living in public areas. One time it was due to a metal pole laying across the sidewalk and other times to avoid bodies in doorways and along the sidewalks. There are many elderly and handicapped people living in this high traffic area, and it is vital that we not add additional hazards to an already overcrowded place.

Sanitation is also a problem here. I have stepped in what looked very much like human excrement and urine. Many stores have closed their bathrooms. The Longs Pali has had an "out of order" restroom for as long as I can remember, and the Ross store on Hotel Street has not had public restrooms for ages. Also Macys, one of the few downtown stores with public restrooms, is closing soon.

The present system of giving a day's notice to move abandoned possessions simply does not work. I have personally witnessed a homeless man and his dogs, living in front of the Izumo Taisha Mission at Kukui and College Walk, leave and return countless times. This mission, one of the few Shinto Shrines in the U.S. and definitely a tourist attraction, is generally surrounded by two to three homeless encampments. Advance notice is a waste of the city's time and money when individuals simply pack up, leave, and return in a few days.

Our city is a prime tourist destination, but will it remain so with the growing number of homeless camping out in public areas? Tourists frequently complain of this situation, but for residents too it is a serious problem.

Please find other viable options for the homeless and do not allow them to take over our sidewalks and other public areas.

Karen Edwards
60 N. Beretania, #407
Honolulu, HI 96817
808 536-7850

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