



Stop The Ken Houston
Project 2025
EAP



Emails and Signal messages with recommendations, ideas, criticisms, requests for mutual aid or to volunteer and/or join the collective are welcome.

Bread and Thorns Mutual Aid Collective

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Oakland city councilmember Ken Houston has proposed drastic changes to the 2020 Encampment Management Policy (EMP), calling it the 2025 Encampment Abatement Policy (EAP). To boil down the most drastic and damaging points of the proposal, it:

- A) Defines encampment to exclude vehicles and authorizes citation and towing of inhabited vehicles.
- B) Continues to require 7 day notice prior to non-urgent encampment closures.
- C) Clarifies emergency and urgent health and safety conditions that authorize immediate, 24 hour, or 72 hour notice for encampment closures including encampments blocking sidewalks.

The practical effects of this proposal would be to allow the city to sweep any encampment and tow anyone's RV/bus/van/car violating city or state vehicle codes, regardless if it is their home, without any warning or notice. If this proposal passes, people will come home to find all of their belongings gone with no notice and no regard for important personal items - family photos, paperwork, medication, walkers, clothing, food, etc.. This would be a disaster. Multiple studies have shown that sweeps cause an increase in fatalities and Oakland's homeless population is already suffering more than its share. This proposal is callous, heartless, and in line with the vicious administration currently in the White House. This callous disregard for life coming from the Trump administration happens to line up with Governor Newsom's plans, as well as, apparently Ken Houston's and his allies. Oakland deserves better than this pick-me fascism.

Houston's rationalization for this heartless proposal boils down to "everybody's doing it." At a city council meeting in late July, he claimed "we're behind the curve. We're not in line with other cities. San Francisco's putting down some laws right now that are pushing RVs over to our city." This is apparently in reference to new, draconian laws in SF limiting RV parking to 2 hours. So Houston is basically saying Oakland needs to keep up with the fascists. Rather than focusing on housing people, Houston's "new" way is to just keep sweeping people, like the old way, but doing it with more cruelty and inhumanity.

Though he attempted to get the proposal passed before the council took a break in August, it will go before the public safety committee on September 10th, then before the whole council for a vote on September 15th. There seems to be very little pushback in the council against this proposal, so it is crucial to put pressure on council members to act in the interests of Oakland's residents, not in the interests of Houston, Trump, and his ilk.

Houston's proposal is particularly disgusting given the platform he ran for council on, which his proposal is a complete betrayal of. During the election campaign, Houston - whose proposal is to criminalize homelessness - said this:

"For those experiencing homelessness, I advocate for Safe Parking programs, sanctioned encampments, and rapid re-housing. Long-term, we need more affordable and supportive housing through public-private partnerships, while creating sites where the unhoused can utilize vacant spaces. Working with housing providers to offer appropriate shelter options is crucial.

To avoid criminalizing homelessness, Oakland should focus on services, expanding outreach teams, and providing dignified shelters, partnering with nonprofits for comprehensive care. Homelessness should be addressed as a housing and public health issue, not a criminal one."

The Encampment Abatement Proposal is a clear 180 degree turn away from Houston's claimed values.

How to Help Stop Ken Houston's Project 2025 EAP

There are two upcoming city council special meetings covering this proposal. The first meeting is the Special Public Safety Committee Meeting Wednesday, September 10th, at 11:00am. The second meeting is Monday, September 15th, at 9:30am. It is crucial that the public comes out and lets the city council know how disastrous this proposal would be for our unhoused community members. Instructions for speaking at city council meetings can be found in the previous issue of this zine - Get the Grease - or from the C4C guide linked in this QR code.



Here are some important talking points explaining why this proposal is such a bad idea:

- 1. This Policy will Increase Mortality, Violate Rights and Worsen the Unsheltered Crisis**
 - Repeated evictions increase unhoused deaths and exacerbate chronic health conditions
 - They do not solve homelessness. They make it harder to exit homelessness
 - They make more people unsheltered
 - They waste money on ineffective and harmful practices in the midst of a budget crisis
 - They violate constitutional rights to due process and protection from state created danger and the Americans with Disabilities Act
 - They violate human rights
 - This policy threatens to arrest people who cannot relocate to a “low sensitivity zone” or accept shelter, despite the significant accessibility problems with relocation and shelters for disabled people.
 - It threatens all residents in “high sensitivity zones” with criminalization, which covers 90% of the city’s public space.
 - This policy is in line with Trump’s authoritarian executive order calling for increased criminalization of homelessness
- 2. This Policy Is not in alignment with Oakland’s Homelessness Strategic Plan, the County’s Home Together Plan, or the County’s Measure W Framework**
 - This policy contradicts and undermines the work of the Mayor’s new Office of Homelessness Strategy by excluding it from the encampment team that it is supposed to oversee. This policy should not be rushed through before the new office is able to do its important work
 - This policy will contradict the Measure W framework which calls for connecting people to housing and services and including people with lived experience in policy making and oversight.
 - It will disproportionately target black Oaklanders for forced displacement, contradicting the equity and housing goals of the County’s Home Together Strategic Plan.
- 3. This policy IS in alignment with Trump’s fascist Executive Order, and the racist real estate industry’s agenda to displace Black, Indigenous, and low-income people from Oakland.**
 - Like Trump’s Executive Order, this proposal is authoritarian and will ultimately backfire because it’s not a real solution to the problem of homelessness. The solution to homelessness is housing, and this policy would do nothing to house people.
 - Why has there been so much resistance and so many delays to proposals that would open up spaces for people who currently can’t afford housing to stabilize, but such a rush to pass this proposal that will only further destabilize houseless people and our neighborhoods? Because of pressure from the real estate industry, which is seeking to gentrify Oakland and drive marginalized people out of the city by any means necessary. Realtors and developers play an outsized role in our political system, which leads to policies like this that prioritize developer profits over the community’s real needs.

- 5,000 homeless Oaklanders are not going to magically disappear if this legislation passes. If you take away vehicles that people are living in without providing shelter, they're going to have to sleep somewhere. This proposal is doubling down on a policy that has already failed Oakland because it doesn't deal with the reality that people need somewhere to lay their heads at night.

4. Community Based Groups and People with Lived Experience Have Positive Solutions

- Adopt a public health and human rights approach
- Open safe lands on vacant lots for the unhoused to have a refuge from evictions and access to sanitation, healthcare and case management
- Promote beautification of the city through community clean ups
- Fill gaps in residential and commercial garbage service to mitigate dumping
- As called for by the county Measure W framework, center the valuable expertise of people with lived experience in the design, implementation and oversight of interim and permanent housing programs

Example Comment

If you speak out in front of the city council, here is an example comment. Please use this to help you create your own comment based on the talking points you find most relevant, from your own lived experience, from your professional knowledge, etc.. You will have up to 2 minutes to make your statement.

“My name is *Your Name*, from (*neighborhood or district, if you want to specify*), and I have come to speak against the 2025 Encampment Abatement Policy, which will greatly increase unannounced sweeps and broadly criminalize homelessness.

Sweeps have proven useless in solving the homelessness crisis. Sweeps cause people to lose their food, clothing, medicine, shelter, and community and increases the risk of death from violence, illness, or drug overdose. Criminalizing homelessness does no good. To quote Oakland city council candidate Ken Houston, ‘to avoid criminalizing homelessness, Oakland should focus on services, expanding outreach teams, and providing dignified shelters, partnering with nonprofits for comprehensive care. Homelessness should be addressed as a housing and public health issue, not a criminal one.’ Candidate Ken Houston had a good grasp of the problem. This proposal by council member Ken Houston, however, is an attempt to go backward toward the reactionary world of Donald Trump and his executive order urging the criminalization of homelessness, and is the furthest thing imaginable from candidate Ken Houston’s stance. The EAP would effectively allow the immediate sweep of all homeless people from almost any area of Oakland, with no warning, and criminalize homelessness in a large range of circumstances. This is just as the city of Oakland is about to receive potentially hundreds of millions of Measure W dollars to help house our homeless population. Sweeping now would be a complete waste of time and money when we will soon have the means to effect real and positive change.”

If you are calling your city council member to speak directly on this issue, you could say something like:

“Hello, my name is *Your Name*, from *your district*. I am calling to ask you to vote against the 2025 Encampment Abatement Policy. This policy would represent a leap backward from the current policy, which in itself has been responsible for sweep-related deaths by violence, illness, or overdose. Oakland is about to receive a lot of Measure W money. These funds should be used to purchase more hotels to serve as supportive housing to help our homeless community find permanent housing. Sweeping now will only make the crisis worse and cost more money in the end when we finally start trying to truly solve the problem.”

Bonus: Reminders of Ken Houston's Hypocrisy

As an added bonus, here are city council candidate Ken Houston's statements about his platform regarding the homelessness crisis that he has completely flipped on since taking office. These are all pulled from questionnaires he filled out as a candidate, from EBHO (at <https://ebho.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Ken-Houston-Oakland-City-Council-Candidate-Questionnaire.pdf>) and Empower Oakland (at https://empoweroakland.com/wp-content/uploads/Council-District-7_Kenneth-Houston_Candidate-Questionnaire.pdf).

I believe in embracing people with the proper support services so they can move out of homelessness rather than just displacing them from one place to another.

- Ken Houston, to Empower Oakland's

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