From: Cathy and Paul
To: CityRecorder
Cc: Gretchen Bennett
Subject: January 10 City Council meeting, agenda item 5.c.
Date: Sunday, January 9, 2022 7:15:39 AM

Dear Mayor Bennett and Salem City Councilors:

I write in support of agenda item 5.c., motion from Councilor Stapleton regarding recommendations from the Salem Human Rights Commission. I serve on the Human Rights Commission, and I was on the workgroup that developed the recommendations. My comments have not been reviewed by any other commissioners or workgroup members.

There are four recommendations:

1) Add housing status as a protected identity under SRC Chapter 97.

2) Reconsider the exceptions in Sec. 97.085(a) related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

3) Remove gendered language from SRC Chapter 97.

4) Broaden the definition of "sexual orientation" in Sec. 97.010(a).

Each of these four actions will promote diversity, inclusion, and safety in our community.

1. Housing status. We have heard about instances of our unsheltered neighbors being treated badly, sometimes cruelly, for no other reason than the perception that they are homeless. The City's policy is to eliminate discrimination based on race, religion, color, sex, marital status, familial status, national origin, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and source of income. Adding housing status to this list will provide a remedy for those unsheltered members of our community who experience discrimination and intimidation, without providing special treatment. A future action item for the Commission workgroup is to let our unsheltered neighbors know that we see them and we hear them, and to tell the greater community that it is not okay to treat someone badly based only on the perception that they are homeless. Having language in Chapter 97 protecting people against discrimination and intimidation because of their housing status will help support those communications.

2. Exceptions related to sexual orientation and gender identity. We are concerned that the exceptions in Sec. 97.085(a) may be discriminatory and allow someone to be unfairly evicted based on their identity. These exceptions, and their implications, should be reconsidered.

3. Gendered language. In our review of SRC Chapter 97 we noticed instances in which gendered language is used (i.e., "himself or herself"; "his or her"; "him or her"). Specifically, Sec. 97.010(a) (definition of source of income), 97.085(a)(1), and 97.870. This language should be replaced by appropriate non-gendered terminology (e.g., "them" or "themselves) or removed altogether,

depending on the context. Note that our review was limited to SRC Chapter 97. Other chapters of the Salem Revised Code should also be reviewed for unnecessary gendered language.

4. Sexual orientation. The definition of "sexual orientation" in Sec. 97.010(a) is too narrow. Sexual orientation is a spectrum, not an either/or. The Human Rights Campaign definition in the materials is broader and more inclusive.

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues.

Respectfully,

Cathy Ostrand-Ponsioen