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Good Evening Mayor and Council. My name is Kevin Valley and I live in Hayward. I am no stranger to the issue of homelessness as I spent a little over a year living in a tent next to a freeway sound wall. I had a job, but quite honestly I did not make enough money to afford rents in the area. I did all I could to avoid ending up in that tent, bouncing all over, asking friends if I could sleep on their couches, even for a time living in a storage complex, but in the end, I had to accept that I'd run out of options.

That year changed the course of my life.

There is, I have found, huge stigmas and misunderstandings surrounding homeless people. Although I cannot deny that addiction and alcohol problems exist, they are not necessarily the norm. Over the course of my year outside, I battled addiction issues as well, but those issues were NOT why I was homeless.

I found that when one becomes homeless, they begin to disappear. Their opinions are discarded - IF they are even entertained. They are stereotyped, and ignored for the most part. Unless, of course, they do the unthinkable and walk through areas where families might be. Then, more often than not, the police are called in to remove the "threat" or "eyesore" that the homeless are perceived as being.

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Mayor and Council, I stand before you today to say that I am one of the VERY few lucky ones. I survived, but a great many do not. Mentally, the scars and memories of being homeless still cause me issues from time to time. However, as I said, I AM one of the lucky ones. I found a faith-based place that served a hot dinner - OUTSIDE. I would NEVER have walked into a religious sanctuary for food - for fear of being misconstrued as a thief or vandal - but these people I found gave me much more than food - they listened. After a while, I actually began to trust them, and when they offered to help me I knew I could accept that help with no strings attached.

It didn't happen overnight, of course, but things started to improve for me. I had people I could talk to - that CARED what happened to me - and I attribute 100% of my subsequent rise from the ashes to those who simply put up a couple fold-out tables to serve hot food they'd cooked for people like me. Being outside, it felt more like a picnic, and I didn't have to feel so destitute or institutional. Outside was where I was, and these people came out there and in no uncertain terms, saved my life. Now, I try to help others.

All that being said, I believe we all know the difference between what seems to be a good thing, and what is best. I believe we have an

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innate sense that tells us when we are solving a problem, or simply adding to it. This proposed ordinance before you today in no way at all solves the problem, yet it hinders the very people whose shoulders it falls on. Simply put, the ordinance expects those of us who are doing our best to help to buy insurance before we practice an act of kindness. I, for one, can not afford the fifteen hundred to three thousand dollars needed to buy insurance to do a good deed. In fact, having to do so would put me back at risk of becoming homeless.

Secondly, the ordinance expects those of us who are doing our best to help to come to City Hall to get a permit to practice these acts of kindness. I sincerely doubt the permit process takes a mere 5 or 10 minutes, and I'll be working a lot of overtime just to afford the insurance and certification classes. Spending whatever time I am forced to spend waiting for the wheels of beauracracy to turn is time I cannot work. Seems like a vicious circle, doesn't it?

I am expected to purchase insurance to be a decent human being, sign a "hold harmless" agreement, pay a "refundable" deposit to the city, and have my kitchen certified. My funds will be tapped. It would be silly to put up tables if I cannot afford to put anything on them. This proposed ordinance sends a message that the city - while bringing nothing to the

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table - expects to regulate and control those who are trying to help alleviate hunger and homelessness. It solves nothing.

Adding all this red tape to a person's desire to help those less fortunate says to me that the city would rather the issue just go away. That is a sad and lonely position to take. Homelessness is a long term issue and won't "just go away". I would expect that everyone would know that by now, and rather than wring your hands over the "problem", work with those of us on the front lines to identify what needs to be done LONG TERM. Stop-gap measures and half-hearted attempts won't work. We need to partner together, not "regulate" and hinder. It's the only way this issue can, or should, be addressed.

I would ask every member of this council, after reviewing the data and numbers, spend a mere 60 seconds searching their heart and mind. Each of you knows what seems to be a good thing, and what is best. This ordinance may seem like a good thing, but it is a far cry from what is best. There are many more constructive, sensible, and well thought out ways to satisfy all involved rather than the knee-jerk reaction before you today.

I have yet to hear from a single person - city-employed, resident, business owner, or other - that thinks this ordinance is a good idea. Some of you have been homeless and

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hungry, so you understand what something as simple as a sandwich when you're hungry can mean. Please believe me when I tell you that it can do far more than take away hunger pains. It can give hope.

Please don't take away the only hope some of the needy who live here have.

Look into your hearts. There are other options. Thank you.