

# The Boston Globe

Need is housing, not just shelter  
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THE ARTICLE "As city census starts, homeless man dies" (City Weekly, Dec. 19) highlights a needless tragedy. As a physician treating homeless patients, I also see an opportunity to focus on permanent solutions to homelessness. Mayor Thomas M. Menino, a supporter of compassionate government, lamented, "Some folks, no matter what we do, don't want to come inside."

I have come to understand that shelters can feel dehumanizing and are overwhelming environments for many people. We simply must offer more than emergency shelter. Like Laurie, the woman who spoke with Menino, I too would choose to stay outside to avoid the conditions that I witness in shelters. What should be offered, and what I know my patients would eagerly accept, is housing with supportive services.

Dozens of formerly homeless people in Boston have successfully moved into supportive housing through a Housing First approach, and this model should be expanded. Instead of a plea for people to come into shelter, we would be better armed with additional supportive housing opportunities funded by state, federal, and private resources.

Emergency shelters are clearly not an effective response for some homeless people. It is time to adopt supportive housing on a larger scale.

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