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Open Letter Demands Accountability from Madison and Dane County Leaders on Homelessness Crisis

Former workers, community members, and taxpayers call for systemic changes to address homelessness

Madison, WI – In a powerful open letter to local government, former homeless services workers, community advocates, and residents have demanded urgent action to address the homelessness crisis in Dane County. Sent to city and county officials, and shared with media outlets and stakeholders, the letter highlights severe gaps in services and inefficiencies at The Beacon, Dane County's primary day shelter.

The letter exposes a stark reality: The Beacon serves an average of 250+ guests daily—nearing or exceeding its capacity—without the onsite case management staff critical for helping individuals stabilize. It contrasts this with other city- and county-funded shelters that staff caseworkers but operate only during non-standard hours. The absence of essential services like ADRC screenings and behavioral health crisis workers prevents unhoused guests from accessing the resources they need, perpetuating their struggles.

Key Demands from the Letter

- 1. A Comprehensive Affordable Housing Plan:**
Develop and implement an actionable plan within 12 months, focused on income-based housing for individuals earning \$0–\$1,200/month.
- 2. Adequate Staffing at Shelters:**
Within six months, deploy county screening specialists and case managers for Long-Term Care (LTC) and behavioral health programs at high-need shelters like The Beacon.
- 3. Revise or Reassign The Beacon's Management:**
Amend The Beacon's contract to include daily case management services, or transition its operations to public management if current providers cannot meet the need.
- 4. Crisis Worker Deployment:**
Ensure trained crisis workers are present at all shelters daily within six months.

A Scathing Critique

The letter exposes Madison and Dane County leaders' misplaced priorities—allocating hundreds of millions for a new jail and millions for a public market while neglecting systemic solutions to homelessness. It challenges the frequent excuse of “no money” as hollow when significant taxpayer resources are funneled into these projects.

“Leadership in Madison and Dane County has failed to address the causes of homelessness, perpetuating a costly cycle of crisis management while neglecting comprehensive solutions,” said Lindberg Chambliss, former Community Liaison of The Beacon. “This letter is a call to action for our leaders to prioritize dignity, stability, and the well-being of our most vulnerable neighbors.”

The letter further critiques the lack of coordination among city and county agencies, leaving critical needs—such as mental health, addiction, aging, and disability support—unmet. It emphasizes the human cost of these failures: desperation among the unhoused that leads to theft, violence, and other survival behaviors, all of which could be alleviated with proper intervention.

A Warning for Inaction

The letter delivers a clear warning: if the outlined demands are not met, organized campaigns will work to replace elected and appointed officials who continue to fail the community. Transparency and accountability remain key, with the letter being shared widely, including with over 400 current and former homeless services workers in Dane County.

For More Information

For a copy of the letter or to schedule an interview with one of the signatories, please contact Lindberg Chambliss at lindbergpromo@gmail.com or 515.509.3395.

About the Letter's Authors

This letter reflects the voices of current and former homeless services workers, current and former unhoused individuals, and concerned taxpayers demanding systemic change in Madison and Dane County's approach to homelessness.