September 24th, 2020

Dear Dane County Executive Joe Parisi,

We are writing to you today as members of the Education and Advocacy Committee of the Homeless Services Consortium (HSC) of Dane County. The Education and Advocacy Committee educates and informs the HSC membership and public on local efforts to serve the Dane County homeless population. We provide training related to public benefits and mainstream resources to the HSC membership including how best to coordinate services and provide education on systems change to the HSC membership and public. We monitor and respond to proposed federal, state and local legislation and educate HSC members on issues affecting the homeless population and ways to respond.

The HSC Board of Directors and the City of Madison have received requests totaling over $10.4M for HUD ESG-CV funds and only $3.4M is available to allocate for emergency shelter, rapid rehousing, prevention, and street outreach. This funding gap means many quality proposals are left unfunded. We write with extreme concern for the current unmet needs of people experiencing homelessness and the expected increase in need with the winter approaching, the ending of federal COVID relief funds, and the expiration of the CDC Order halting certain evictions.

Numbers

While we are able to provide the below numbers, we know that this does not fully capture the full breadth of the problem.

There are currently over 440 people in families experiencing homelessness in Dane County.
- 50- 60 families sheltered in hotels (220 people)
- 50 - 60 families on the waiting list (220 people)
- Plus doubled up (people staying with someone else in an unstable or inadequate housing situation due to housing insecurity) + self-paying in hotels + people sleeping in cars
- Up to a dozen families sleeping outside

There are currently 590-610 single people experiencing homelessness in Dane County.
- 170 in hotels (65+ or 1 of the 7 CDC underlying conditions)
- 70 - 90 on waiting list
- 100 sleeping at men's shelter (capacity up to 200)
- 50 sleeping at women's shelter
- Approximately 200 sleeping outside

- 60 State Street (140 unduplicated in the State St. Area but may include some of the following)
    - 50 McPike
    - 30 Bridge
    - 60 other locations
- Plus doubled up + self-paying in hotels + people sleeping in cars

Requests

1. **The City and County must work together to ensure no one has to sleep outside this winter.** Permanent supportive housing is the best solution to end homelessness, but we know that there is not enough affordable housing and services available to make that a reality for all the unhoused people in Dane County this winter. We encourage the City and County to expand their affordable housing funds and increase the commitments in funded projects for housing people on the HSC Coordinated Entry housing list. To address immediate needs this winter and prevent deaths among the unhoused population, we request the City and County 2021 Budgets include provisions for the following.
    i. Maintain hotel room sheltering and expand access to all currently without access to shelter.
    ii. Tiny Houses (we know many people aren't allowed in the hotels or haven't met the criteria - over 65 or 1 of 7 CDC ailments)
    iii. Access to restrooms, water, electricity/heat for persons living in their cars and tents.
2. **We need sufficient night shelter with enough space to social distance, COVID-19 precautions, staffings, etc.** The City and County must work together to open a new men's shelter and address emerging family shelter needs.
3. **We need sufficient day shelter.** The Beacon isn't large enough to be able to socially distance and meet the demands we are seeing. Further, the Capitol is closed, the library has limited services, and businesses are at limited capacity. The day shelter needs to have sufficient showers, storage, laundry, etc.
4. **The City and County should maximize public spaces to address needs of people experiencing homelessness this winter.** The City and County own large indoor and outdoor public spaces in central locations at Monona Terrace and Alliant Energy Center. These facilities should be made available to address the needs for safe, socially-distanced, overnight and day shelter and access to showers and bathrooms. One or more of the Alliant Energy Center's vast surface lots should be made available for Tiny House construction and temporary lodging.
5. **We need universal representation for renters facing eviction.** Every one facing eviction should have access to publicly funded legal representation. The City and County should expand eviction prevention legal services funding. While the CDC issued an order halting evictions for persons who sign a declaration regarding their individual circumstances, the Order does not prevent all evictions nor provide rent assistance or cancel rent obligations. Moreover, when the Order expires at the end of the year, we are expecting a spike of evictions.
6. **The County should increase access to recovery resources for people with mental wellness and substance use needs.** We support the creation of a triage and restoration

center, additional funding for recovery services, recovery housing, and funding for peer support specialists.

7. **Provide free bus passes and gas cards.** Transportation is repeatedly identified as an unmet need for persons experiencing homelessness. The City should provide for free bus rides for unhoused persons. Gas cards should be made available for people who are not able to access bus services and who have transportation needs in areas inaccessible by Madison Metro.

8. **Support for people on waiting lists for the hotels.** As service providers work to connect people experiencing homelessness to hotel sheltering, persons on the hotel waitlist need supportive services to stay connected to housing opportunities and pursue resources needed to obtain and maintain housing.

Thank you in advance for your time and attention to this emergency situation facing our community.

Signed,

The Education and Advocacy Committee of the Homeless Services Consortium of Dane County