

Dear Chair Wegleitner and Members of the Health and Human Needs Committee,

I am writing in support of Resolution 184 and the County Executive's Emergency Harm Reduction and Prevention Act.

The reason I am not able to attend in person this evening: I facilitate an overdose grief support group, GRASP, the second Thursday of each month. GRASP is not an advocacy group and anything said in the group is held in confidence. I am not writing on behalf of GRASP.

I lost my stepdaughter to overdose two years ago. Since that time, I have heard from many friends and family members of those who have lost loved ones to overdose, often fentanyl related overdoses. Many of these deaths were preventable, IF the person with a substance use disorder was:

- not using alone
- using with a friend/family member who had Narcan/naloxone and knew how to use it
- using with someone who could call 911 without fear of arrest

Ideally, no one would have a life-threatening chronic health condition like substance use disorder (SUD). The reality is that SUD treatment is often unavailable or unaffordable, as is recovery housing. Funding these items is very important. However, people won't get to treatment and recovery unless we can stop them from dying of overdose. Opioid overdoses are rising in Dane County. Fentanyl is contaminating the street supply for people who believe they are buying other substances.

That is why I support partnering with community organizations to provide widespread, easy access to Narcan. We need to follow the example of Fitchrona EMS and "leave a dose behind" when there is an overdose.

Recovery coaches need to be readily available to people who overdose. We need widespread distribution of Narcan at non-threatening and non-stigmatizing locations. We need to meet people where they are. It's outreach to save lives. We also need education and prevention, both for people who have SUD, families, and even for people who have not yet been touched by this public health crisis.

Please support the Emergency Harm Reduction and Prevention Action Act and Resolution 184. Please act now to allow this important work to begin.

Sincerely,
Annette Czarnecki

Health & Human Needs Committee Remarks (Opioid Settlement Grant) 10/13/22

Linda Lenzke, OutReach LGBTQ AODA Advocate

Hello, my name is Linda, and I'm an alcoholic. I'm also the LGBTQ+ AODA Advocate for the OutReach LGBTQ+ Community Center. I've been in recovery from alcohol, substances, and behaviors that no

longer serve me for over 35 years. I'm a Wisconsin Certified Peer-Specialist and I share my lived experience as I support those who still struggle.

My position at OutReach is only half-time, however the scope of our work and the needs of our marginalized LGBTQ+ community are far greater. As a nonprofit, OutReach relies on grants and fundraising to underwrite our services. We are a *small* program staff who serves a *large* Dane County LGBTQ+ community at risk.

I began my position at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in May 2020. It created additional challenges on how to serve our community, who were suffering *more* due to the isolation the pandemic created, yet we were unable to directly serve them in-person. Studies showed that substance and alcohol use increased disproportionately in our LGBTQ+ community than most groups. Accidental overdoses and suicides became another deadly epidemic, especially for our youth and transgender members.

During 2020 and 2021, I created, in collaboration with recovery cohorts, and with the support of grants, *The Road Forward* initiative, a series of virtual skill-building workshops designed to support our underserved and marginalized LGBTQ+ homeless, transgender and gender nonconforming communities, LGBTQ+ seniors, LGBTQ+ communities of color, and LGBTQ+ individuals struggling with behavioral health, substance use, and alcohol.

I also facilitated virtual and hybrid recovery meetings, LGBTQ+ Al-Anon and A.A. 12-Step meetings. When attendance continued to remain low at A.A. meetings, I made a decision to create a format that better served our LGBTQ+ recovery community, based on the Harm Reduction Substance Use model, that understands that there are many pathways to recovery. After our first meeting attendance increased.

I'm also a member of the **Dane County Ending Deaths from Despair Task Force** and sit on the advisory board for the **Dane County Alliance Against Commercial Tobacco** addressing issues of substance use and dependence beginning with youth. OutReach has presented educational workshops at the Wisconsin NAMI Conferences for the past two years, in addition to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and LGBTQ+ -101 workshops with state agencies, libraries, homeless day shelters, schools, and corporations. Our small team of 3 program staff have provided 30 workshops for the community this year, an average of one per week. We have collaborated closely with PIPC-Pride in Prevention Coalition LGBTQ Substance Use Prevention, Safe Communities, and the African American Opioid Coalition. I mention this because we are poised and well-qualified to hit the ground running working with these partners.

What do we need to deliver trauma-informed, compassionate care, and recovery prevention to stem the tide of accidental overdose due to opioids, including the increased threat of fentanyl? We need additional funding for a full-time outreach prevention specialist to work directly *in* the community, meeting our LGBTQ+ community members 'where they are', and navigating services with treatment centers and community partners, plus provide tools for safe-use, like fentanyl test strips, needle exchanges, and Narcan to prevent overdose. By augmenting our existing virtual programming and support groups with in-person community intervention and outreach, we can make a measurable difference with the help of the Dane County Emergency Harm Reduction and Prevention Act resolution.

Thank you.

Dear Dane County Health and Human Needs Committee members,

The Pride in Prevention Coalition (PIPC) is a joint program of Safe Communities and OutReach LGBTQ Community Center, which was formed in 2018 to address addiction and opioid overdose in the LGBTQ community in Dane County. The LGBTQ communities are at a much greater risk of addiction and overdoses. We have also worked in coalition with the African American Opioid Coalition serving the Black community, which also at much higher risk for addiction and overdose.

The Dane County Emergency Harm Reduction and Prevention Act resolution is on the agenda for your committee meeting this week and includes funding for the PIPC program and African American Opioid Coalition, a program of Safe Communities.

I have attached a document about the history of PIPC, activities of the coalition, and need for funding its expansion. To date, the PIPC Coalition has received a small amount of financial assistance and staffing from Safe Communities and OutReach, but has not had any funding of its own. Please approve this resolution which will provide resources to expand this important work.

Thanks for your support,

Steve Starkey, Executive Director, OutReach LGBTQ Community Center

Cheryl Wittke, Executive Director, Safe Communities

Hello,

I am a pediatric cardiologist at the UW Madison and a board member of the American Heart Association in Madison.

I am writing to support the double dollars program. The AHA has been involved in many efforts to improve the heart care of people throughout Dane county. Of particular interest to me is determining how we can best use funds to help support those at most need. The double dollars program does that.

At the same time, the double dollars program not only helps families (over 2,000 people in 2021), but helps Dane country farmers and our local stores who support the effort.

I hope you will consider continuing support of the program. And, given the relative effectiveness of synchronizing the products from local food producers using the infrastructure with current government programs and local stores, I hope you will consider an additional investment beyond prior years. The AHA has suggested an additional 200,000 dollars – though I suggest that even this is not enough given the need).

If I can be of further assistance, let me know.

Nick Von Bergen, MD
Pediatric Cardiac Electrophysiology
The University of Wisconsin - Madison