



October 24, 2022

Dane County Board of Supervisors
Health and Human Needs Committee
210 Martin Luther King Blvd
Madison, WI 53703

Honorable Members of the Health and Human Needs Committee:

We are writing to offer our strong support for Dane County Executive Parisi's proposed use of opioid settlement dollars awarded to Dane County in 2022, as presented in Resolution 184.

We represent the three major Dane County health care organizations that collaborate with the organizations that will receive the funding proposed in the resolution. We also represent the many who treat patients who suffer the personal health consequence of this epidemic.

Recent increases in overdose fatalities across all populations in Dane County and across the nation is being further fueled by the ever-increasing presence of fentanyl in both heroin and laced in street drugs of all kinds. We need to redouble our efforts now and are fortunate to have the strong collaborative efforts of our community partners to lead the efforts of more than 100 organizations that are working together to reduce harm and prevent fatalities and address Dane County's opioid overdose epidemic.

Thank you.

Robin Lankton, Director, Population Health, UW Health
Juli Aulik, Director, Community Relations, UW Health
Rishelle Eithun, Program Manager, Pediatric Injury Prevention
Mary Lauby, Coordinator, Adult Injury Prevention

Kyle Martin, MD, Regional EM Medical Director
Nikeya Bramlett, SSM Health Community Health Manager
Ben Van Pelt, SSM Health Director of Government Affairs

James Arnett, UnityPoint Health – Meriter, CEO
Sarah Valencia, UnityPoint Health – Meriter, Director of Population Health and Addiction Services
Jessika Kasten, UnityPoint Health, Regional Marketing Director

To whom it may concern:

10/25/22

I am writing this statement to be submitted at the Dane County Health and Human Needs Committee 10/25/22 in support of more county positions to be categorized as Case Managers rather than Licensed Social Workers. The purpose of this is to open opportunities to more diverse candidates of all backgrounds. It is my understanding that there has been push-back from some County employees toward the idea that some human services positions be “downgraded” so that those without Social Work licensure may apply. I would argue that countless capable, experienced, and quality workers will be excluded from the hiring pool and the County workforce if the positions are kept to be exclusive to those privileged enough to complete social work licensure.

I worked as a Home Visitor through a Purchase of Service (POS) Agency in Dane County for eight years. Because I speak Spanish, I worked with a majority of immigrant and undocumented families with small children to navigate systems and reach their goals related to family stability and well-being. Our programming was co-located with Joining Forces for Families social workers in neighborhoods that were determined to be “underserved.” After that ample experience with some of Dane County’s most vulnerable populations on a variety of issues, my own upward mobility and family stabilization goals pointed to possible employment with the County. There were several times that JFF social workers or supervisors, having personal knowledge of my service delivery and level of professional dedication, referred me to County social work jobs. I would have to share or remind them that I don’t hold a social work degree or licensure.

It was understood that Dane County supported my work and programming financially through the purchase of service contract. It was clear from multiple County employees that I was seen as a valued, capable, and client-centered service provider. When I became a program supervisor while maintaining a client case load, I became more familiar with internal County systems. I realized that Dane County did pay my employer for my services and expected outcomes through the contract, but did not value my work enough to ensure my wage, health benefits, and retirement were sufficient enough to be comparable to that of their own employees. Purchase of service agencies and workers are often asked to do more with less. Benefits and wages pale in comparison. It is my perception that County Employees might lose sight of this at times. There are many skilled and diverse workers doing much of the human services work the county has delegated to them, while they are barely making a living wage.

I enjoyed my job but knew it was time to move on. While looking for a new job, I compared my own benefits to those of Dane County, the City of Madison, and UW-Madison. It was clear that employment with the County would help myself and my child to be economically self-sufficient. This was not possible with my POS employer. Ironically, I was trying to help families become economically stable and access quality health care, etc. while I was struggling myself largely in part to being a single mother. Despite working fulltime and being a college graduate, my stabilization was threatened by “the benefits cliff” I analyzed how I could guarantee I would be able to afford to keep my son (who has asthma) safe and healthy, how I might be able to think about retirement someday. There is something to be said for “lived experience” in this example. I could empathize and contextualize with families who were not set up for success, who were shut out of opportunities that would bring about great changes to themselves and their children. I could frame how a person can do everything “right” and not quite be able to move forward toward financial independence and well-being.

Shutting out applicants that could be very successful in case manager job duties, but lack Social Work licensure, is another example of how well-meaning institutions, can create the very barriers that their mission statements claim to be working against.

I hold an undergraduate degree from UW Madison and a DPI preK-8 teaching license after a graduate level post-baccalaureate teacher licensure program. My work experience, transferrable skills and training told those around me that I could “come work at the County.” Unfortunately, I was not able to bring my talents to most of the jobs I investigated due to the County due to structural barriers of strict requirements in the application process such as the requirement of a social work license.

Please allow those that are capable of doing Dane County Case Manager-level jobs the opportunity to do so, or at least apply. Clients deserved to be served by people capable of serving them. People with the ability to do a job should be given the opportunity to do that job, this simple concept comes from the UW’s “Leading for Racial Equity” series. I rarely have seen hiring processes that honor this practice.

I could have made more arguments about this type of lasting change positively impacting the diversification of the County workforce or helping to reach racial/ethnic parity so service providers reflect the populations that are served. I am hoping that the board or committee members are well-versed in these arguments and are also taking them into consideration. I chose to speak more about my own experiences, but do not wish to diminish equity arguments that tell us that if you want a more diverse workforce, use a multitude of strategies to diversify the application pool. This would be a very simple way to help the county move in the direction it claims it wants to go. Actions speak louder than words.

Thank you for reading.

Clare Dahl

Apologies for not getting this out sooner, but I wanted to express my strong opposition to the 2023 Operating Budget Amendment HHN-O-7 that proposes changing 4.0 case manager positions in the CCS unit to social worker positions.

This will greatly limit any attempts to bring diversity and promote inclusion within the CCS unit. As a licensed marriage and family therapist and substance abuse counselor, with 10 years of experience, I am not even considered qualified to hold a position within the CCS unit.

I think that given the times and the abilities that many LMFT's, LPC's, substance use counselors and case managers possess... I think it would be moving backwards to not allow other mental health professionals to hold positions within the CCS unit.

At Journey Mental Health Center we have had to expand our pool of mental health professionals given the limited availability of candidates in our area. As a result we have been able to diversify our staff and bring on many new, and very qualified, staff members who offer a well rounded perspective that only a diverse group of educational backgrounds could provide.

Thank you-

Andi Galka MS, LMFT, SUD
Clinical Team Manager - CCS/GROW Program
Journey Mental Health Center
25 Kessel Court
Madison WI 53711

10/25/22

Health and Human Needs Committee,

Thank you for your service and for the opportunity to express opposition for the reclassification of CCS case managers to social workers. My name is Kristi Nelson. I am a school psychologist by training and currently serving on Madison Metropolitan School District's Mental Health Team. I am also a member of CCS's Coordination Committee. I am writing this letter on behalf of myself and several of my colleagues, who have indicated their support by signing below.

I oppose this reclassification for several reasons. First, the ability to hire case managers would allow for greater diversity in the CCS team, which would better serve Dane County families. We all know how important it is for families to see themselves reflected and their cultures validated and upheld. Furthermore, recent research has shown racial bias in the social worker licensing exam, which is yet another barrier for culturally and linguistically diverse individuals to break into the profession. CCS has been especially motivated to hire Spanish speaking individuals to support Spanish speaking families for the last four years. They had been unable to hire a Spanish speaking social worker due to not receiving bilingual Spanish social worker candidates. After the position was reclassified to a case manager, however, the position was filled in August 2022. There are many highly qualified individuals who do not hold a social work license and to discount them is incredibly unjust and is only perpetuating systemic racism and oppression. The field of social work is largely white, cisgender females. This is not to discount the amazing work that social workers do, but rather to increase diversity in the CCS team and the ability to provide services in a family's first language.

In addition, the social worker positions have been unfilled for quite some time, resulting in families being placed on the waitlist for four months or longer. With these positions filled, the waitlists would likely be cut down to four to six weeks at the longest. When our MMSD students have to wait an inordinate amount of time to receive services, it is incredibly difficult for them and their families. Research has shown time and time again that early intervention is key and leads to more positive outcomes. When students do not receive the mental health services that they need, it is much more difficult for them to access learning in school, which then snowballs and puts them further behind their peers academically and social-emotionally.

In conclusion, we are asking you to please refrain from reclassifying the case manager positions to social worker positions. Case manager positions will allow for greater diversity of applicants, better service delivery for families, and faster connection to services.

Thank you for your time,

Kristi Nelson - School Mental Health Coach

Carrie Klein - School Mental Health Coach

Dani Haught - Bilingual Mental Health Navigator

Olivia Szymanski - Mental Health Bilingual Resource Specialist

Tracey Scherr - Mental Health Partnerships Coordinator

Ellen Anderson - Mental Health Team Practicum Student