



DOING THE MOST GOOD

THE SALVATION ARMY OF DANE COUNTY
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Madison Genesis Corps
Lieutenant Sanity and Jean Thammavongsa
Corps Officers

July 22, 2014

Dear Homeless Issues Committee,

On behalf of The Salvation Army of Dane County, please accept this letter in opposition to the proposed ordinance requiring a county-enforced appeal system, including a third party review process. While the motivation of such a measure has its merits, I am concerned about the implications this system will have on safety, confidentiality and resources.

Shelter residents are often afforded many opportunities to make better choices. Typically, residents are only asked to leave shelter after compromising the safety of other residents or after their behavior has escalated despite staff intervention and redirection. The responsibility, and liability, of operating a safe shelter falls squarely on our shoulders. Externalizing that decision is a dangerous path to travel.

Further, a central tenet of the proposed ordinance affords grievants the right to review "all adverse information and evidence" that relates to the decision in question. Though the ordinance allows names of witnesses to be redacted if he/she was the victim of violent (or threatened) criminal activity, I am concerned that witnesses will be dissuaded from disclosing interactions and events out of fear they will be identified. If a witness does come forward it is safe to assume that their confidentiality, and possible safety, will be jeopardized if/when such evidence is handed over to the grievant.

Finally, I am largely concerned about the ramifications this system will have on our resources (i.e. time) and morale. Our staff is already incredibly overburdened. Redirecting and devoting resources to carrying out these measures will be onerous.

The Salvation Army makes extraordinary efforts to ensure that women and families excel in shelter. Rules and expectations are clearly defined at program entry and posted throughout. Consequences are graduated and are in direct relation to the severity of violation. Interactions are arduously documented. When necessary, residents and clients engage in our established grievance and appeal system; a system that holds in highest regard the safety of the grievant as well as the safety of our one hundred and twenty other residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leigha Weber".

Leigha Weber

Director of Social Services

"Have you remembered The Salvation Army in your will?"

Donations by phone (608)256-2321 or internet www.salvationarmydanecounty.org