

October 20, 2015

All Supervisors, Dane County Board  
City-County Building  
215 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Supervisors,

We write representing coalitions of providers in Dane County's Purchase of Service (POS) network.

Together, we serve thousands consumers and families and employ a diverse workforce of thousands more hard working staff in towns, villages and cities across Dane County.

The people we serve are also diverse: young, old, at-risk, poor, middle class, African American, Latino, Southeast Asian, Caucasian, LGBTQ and others. The services we offer ensure that children, youth, families, seniors, those who are homeless, and people with disabilities, get the support, treatment and opportunity they deserve.

We appreciate that economic conditions in the past have made it challenging for the County Executive and the Board to fully fund human services. We realize that the county invests half of its budget in human services. We believe, and hope you, too, believe that investment is necessary, pays dividends and is one of the most important priorities of government.

According to the Baker Tilly study in 2014 it had been "an average" of five years since POS agencies received a cost of living adjustment (COLA). Two years have passed since then. For some systems there has been no cost of living increases for a much longer period. During the last five years the consumer price index has risen by an average of 2.0%. Some costs, such as health insurance for employees, have risen by double digits.

The Baker Tilly Study noted that, "Over time, failure to provide COLA increases will result in reduced quality and service levels provided by POS agencies." Agencies told Baker Tilly in that study that "there is no more room to stretch their dollars and feel that they are stretched too thin." Tragedies – when consumers, families and staff feel the brunt of cuts to services – have and will continue to occur.

As many of us said publicly at the hearing on the human services budget, we appreciate the solid budget the County Executive put together and we appreciate his earmarking of \$512,000 in tax dollars (matched by \$199,000 in revenue) to provide a .5% (point five) increase to POS Agencies. In this year when the economy is improving and more investment is possible in the people and organizations that support some of the county's most vulnerable residents, we respectfully urge the Board to add to the County Executive's COLA.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Karen Andro, Chair, Homeless Services Consortium  
Dee Nash, Executive Director, Access to Independence  
Casey Behrend, Executive Director, Briarpatch Youth Services  
Alexa Butzbaugh, Executive Director, Progressive Community Services  
Todd Costello, Executive Director Community Living Alliance, Chair, Physical Disabilities  
Laura Fabick, Chair, Recovery Coalition  
Elena Golden, Director of Residential Services, Goodwill Industries  
William Greer, CEO, Journey Mental Health Center  
Sharyl Kato, Executive Director The Rainbow Project, Chair, CYF Consortium  
Bob Power, Chair, Focal Point (Senior Centers)  
Dani Rischall, Executive Director, Chrysalis  
Brad Schlough, Director of Community Services, Journey Mental Health Center  
Scott Strong, Executive Director, Community Partnerships  
Kim Turner, Chair, DD Coalition

CC: County Executive Joe Parisi  
Director of Human Services Lynn Green