



CITY COUNTY HOMELESS ISSUES COMMITTEE

Linda Ketcham & Takisha Jordan, Co-Chairs



Date: June 13, 2025

To: City of Madison Common Council, Dane County Board of Supervisors, Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway, County Executive Melissa Agard

From: The City County Homeless Issues Committee, Linda Ketcham and Takisha Jordan, Co-Chairs

Re: City County Homeless Issues Committee 2026 Budget Recommendations

On behalf of the City County Homeless Issues Committee (CCHIC), we would like to express our sincere gratitude for your continued commitment to addressing housing and homelessness within our community.

Each year, CCHIC holds a budget listening session to hear directly from the public about housing and homelessness concerns in Madison/Dane County. These sessions provide valuable input that helps shape the committee's recommendations for the upcoming City and County budgets.

The 2026 budget listening session took place during our meeting on June 9th, 2025. We heard from members of the public - including individuals with lived experience of homelessness, homeless service providers, and advocacy groups – who attended the meeting or submitted written comments. Following the session, the committee reviewed the City and County 2026 budget processes and discussed recommendations. We would like to highlight the committee's recommendations.

1. Maintain Financial Support for Homeless Services:

We strongly urge that funding for homeless services in Madison/Dane County remains intact despite the City of Madison's and County of Dane's projected budget shortfall. We recognize the complexities involved in this budget season, but the needs of our most vulnerable populations must remain a priority. We encourage the City and County governments to collaborate closely to bridge any funding gaps and sustain vital services.

2. Address Key Priorities for 2026 Budget:

- **Shelter Funding:** Ensure adequate and sustained financial support for our local shelters, including family shelters and shelters for single men and women. While we acknowledge and appreciate the City and County's investment in capital funding for the new purpose-built men's shelter, ongoing operating support is essential to ensure the shelter can function effectively and provide an appropriate level of supportive services. Since its relocation and expansion during the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost of operating the men's shelter has increased significantly. These higher costs have largely been covered by federal COVID relief funds, which will be exhausted at the end of 2025. **It is critical that the City and County identify and**

allocate sufficient funding in their 2026 budgets to ensure the men's shelter can operate at the new facility and meet the needs of those it serves.

- **Affordable Housing:** Affordable and adequate housing programs need to be maintained and take priority over other new budget initiatives. We support the increased funding not only for the Affordable Housing Development Funds, but also housing development where tenants pay no more than 30% of their income including senior housing. By prioritizing in these initiatives for adequate housing, this will save money in the long run.
- **Dairy Drive Campground:** Continued funding and support to provide temporary shelter at the Dane Drive Campground for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness with high needs that are sleeping in tents, cars, on sidewalks, etc.
- **Youth Services:** Renewal of funding and support for youth services for those that have runaway, are experiencing homelessness, and/or facing other challenges. Briarpatch is the County's only agency who provides a voluntary youth shelter for minors who are facing housing insecurity and instability and helps provide a safe space, warm meals, mentorship, while maintaining a school connection.
- **Solace Home:** Continued funding and support for hospice care for people experiencing terminal illness and housing insecurity. Solace provides safe shelter and compassionate end-of-life caregiving where individuals have access to dying in a safe environment with the support of people committed to honoring their comfort, dignity, and humanity.
- **CARES (Community Alternative Response Emergency Services):** Continued funding and support for the CARES team, which serves as an additional resource for behavioral health emergencies that occur in our community. This integrated crisis intervention has made a significant positive impact on addressing mental health with 911 calls and diverting individuals from emergency rooms and jails. We support any new funding to add an additional team member, including one designated specifically for housing related issues.

3. Create Additional Line Item to 2026 Budget

Recognizing the vital role that individuals with lived experience of homelessness can and must play in shaping effective, compassionate and equitable solutions, we support creating a new budget line item for a **Lived Experience, Peer Support, and Leadership Fund** in the amount of \$500,000. We request that the City allocate \$250,000 and Dane County allocate \$250,000 in their respective operating budgets to support and strengthen Madison/Dane County's homeless services system.

4. Directive to the Local Housing Authorities

While criminal background checks are a tool used by housing authorities to ensure community safety, they can also pose significant challenges to individuals with a criminal record. After a period of incarceration, individuals impacted by the justice system and returning to the community often face poverty, potentially leading to denial of housing. CCHIC supports a directive to the Community Development and Dane County Housing Authorities to review and revise their eligible criteria for those with conviction history to open opportunities for housing. Reducing barriers to housing access for individuals with criminal records can help mitigate the negative impacts of criminal background checks can lead to such as stigma and the disproportionately affect it has on racial and ethnic minority groups, who are often over-represented in the criminal justice system.

We appreciate your attention to these matters and look forward to your support in implementing these recommendations. Thank you for your continued commitment to improving housing and homelessness services in our community.

CC: CCHIC Members
CCHIC Staff
Jim O’Keefe, Community Development Division Director
John Schlueter, Dane County Department of Human Services Director

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