

To: Health and Human Needs Committee

From: Kirsten Seiverd, CCS Intake Worker, DCHS

Re: Resolution 005

05/26/2022

Hello to All Members of HHNC,

Thank you for taking time to listen and read the opinions of those who support or are against this simple but important, and surprisingly misunderstood and controversial, proposition by administration in DCDHS on behalf of hiring efforts for the Comprehensive Community Services program. I am writing to express my full support for this measure.

I have been employed with CCS as a full time intake worker for the past two years. Prior to this I worked in non-profit community mental health programs, providing direct-care case management to adults with chronic and severe mental illness for over 30 years. I am certified as a Social Worker with the State of WI, currently a requirement for this position, as was the case with my previous employment. I have always taken great pride in my work and for the Social Work profession itself. Social work has played key roles in burning trails for social change and justice in our country since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has also been tasked to prove its legitimacy as a profession which has been acquired through education, skill development, establishment of professional ethics and practices, and licensure. It is one of our oldest professions, one of the most misunderstood, one of the most admirable, and one that I am very proud to be a part of. And for these reasons, I understand the perspective of those who are expressing concerns that Resolution 005 may somehow damage the profession, or even threaten our job security (as some have expressed in private). However, they are wrong

The controversy over Res 005 is incredibly unwarranted. It emanated through multiple discussions in the CCS unit over the past 1-2 years about the challenges in attracting a more culturally diverse presence on the unit, along with Spanish-speaking applicants for Intake workers. CCS provides mental health and substance use services to a dynamic variety of ethnic cultures. Latinx is one of the largest, along with Hmong (for who we are fortunate to already have two employees). To have Spanish-speaking staff would be invaluable to providing a safe and validated environment to Latinx citizens who are seeking support during the referral process.

CCS has also engaged in organized, ongoing, monthly discussions about the issues of race, institutional racism, cultural dynamics of PoC living within a white power structure, white privilege, and exploring ways to break down the barriers present in these constructs – on personal, professional, and societal levels. As we should all know by now, access to higher education and financial resources to do so, are massive barriers for PoC. And so, the profession of Social Work is also predominantly a white and female profession.

Res005 came about in our discussions as an effort to attract much needed cultural diversity to our unit so it can be more reflective of the people we serve. While social work experience is ideal for mental health and substance use Intake Work, it certainly is not exclusionary. Res 005 does nothing to threaten the integrity of the social work profession or the quality of on the job skills. It does nothing to threaten anyone's job security. What Res005 DOES do is seek to broaden the pool of applicants so that we *may* see a more culturally diverse applicant pool AND It is asking for *only two out of four* intake positions for the 2022 budget! While the county administration needs to also look at breaking down more complex barriers to diversity and formulate other modalities of attraction, Res005 is a way that one small unit is seeking to improve its own diversity, and to provide more culturally appropriate services to its consumers, including at least one fluent in Spanish, which honestly is desperately needed at this time.

One of our most basic roles as Social Workers is to apply creative thinking and break down barriers where we see them. If we can't start with our own place of professional and personal privilege then we ourselves is what damages the integrity of the profession.

Thank You So Much for Your Time,

Kirsten Seiverd, CSW

CCS Intake

May 26, 2022

Re: Support of 2022 RES-005

Dear Health and Human Needs Committee,

My name is Sydney Kamp and I am a Quality Assurance Specialist with CCS. I am writing a letter in support of 2022 RES-005 (Reclassification of Vacant Social Worker Positions to Case Manager Positions). I believe this is a small way the CCS Unit can support the ever increasing need to diversify the CCS Unit, while still hiring qualified candidates. It is very apparent that our current make-up is primarily White Cis-Gendered women and this does not reflect all of the individuals that are served in the CCS program. The current job description as Social Worker is not getting enough qualified applicants and the CCS program is growing exponentially, especially throughout the pandemic. I believe there can be an overhaul in the hiring process at Dane County and this is one small way our unit can support the vision and values of Dane County Department of Human Services. Although this change is not a guarantee that the unit would get a candidate of racial/ethnic diversity, it still opens the doors to a broader range of applicants that would bring a different perspective through their degree and/or professional background.

Our Intake Social Workers do a tremendous job of working with current and future clients to get them connected to the CCS program and I don't want to diminish their value to our unit. Through my position as Quality Assurance Specialist, I work closely with the community agencies that provide the direct case management support to our CCS clients and if the job title stays at a Social Worker, less than 25% of our current Service Facilitators could apply to the Intake Social Worker position. Through my previous professional experiences in the non-profit world, I know there are a ton of more than qualified applicants that could do this role well that do not hold a social work degree or license. I have a social work degree and license and although there is a lot learned through our education, CCS holds high standards for training, continuing education and expectations in the role and this would not go away just because a new hire does not hold a social work degree.

Dane County Department of Human Services needs to continue to look at recruitment and retention of staff from all backgrounds and experiences. Reclassifying 2 positions as Case Manager is a start and still allows the opportunity for these future staff to work toward a Social Work degree or license if that's what they choose. There are so many degree pathways and licensures and this different perspective would bring so much to the CCS Unit.

Thank you for your time and listening to all the perspectives on this resolution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sydney Kamp". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sydney Kamp

Hello!

My name is Emily Morris and I want to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present my thoughts in support of resolution 005, authorizing the reclassification of vacant social worker positions to case manager positions.

I am one of two lead social workers in the CCS Intake unit at Dane County Department of Human Services. Including myself, we currently have 13 intake workers in the unit.

Much like the field of social work, the CCS intake unit is predominantly composed of Cis White women. As such, we sit in a position of power and privilege as is and now we're in a position to be able to decide whether to loosen the requirements of an intake worker position in the hopes of increasing the diversity of the candidate pool. Frankly, I find opposition to this to be problematic and disconcerting.

This is not a threat to the social work profession and does not eliminate licensed social workers from being able to continue to meet the requirements required for an intake worker position, but rather allows others with valuable licensure, experience, and/or education the chance to also be considered for this opportunity. While there is no guarantee that these individuals will not be cisgender women and/or White, it is about us making a statement regarding our values as a profession and as an institution that has struggled to attract and retain a diverse workforce.

As a department, we have value statements which are reciprocal, applying to both the public who we serve, but also to those we employ. Of note are two of these value statements, one on racial justice and the other on diversity. In our racial justice statement, "We commit to pursuing racial justice through institutional change to actively dismantle policies, practices, messages, and attitudes that both perpetuate and fail to eliminate racism and differential outcomes by race and in our diversity statement, "We celebrate our differences, recognizing diversity as a strength that will help us effectively tackle the challenges we collectively face. We strive to create an inclusive culture by authentically bringing diverse voices and perspectives into discussions and decision-making." It is imperative that we stand behind these values and visions and reclassifying these positions is one way in which to do that.

May 26th 2022

Health and Human Needs Committee,

Thank you for taking the time to listen to community and staff members as we all try to address the increasing need of mental health services.

I am in support of 2022 RES-005: reclassification of vacant social worker positions to case management.

As someone who has been in the CCS unit for over 4 years, I have seen the CCS program grow exponentially. In that time, we have had intake and support staff whose mission is to provide the best possible services our community can provide. Unfortunately, our community's need for CCS services cannot keep up with the hiring process. Over the years, there have been several instances of job postings not getting enough qualified applicants for the Social Worker Intake position. Therefore, I am in support of reclassifying the two vacant social work positions to case management.

As a county, we discuss how to innovate our hiring practices in an effort for our staff to more closely reflect the community we serve. Here is an opportunity to put action to those discussions. Our unit is overwhelmingly white, cis gendered, heterosexual women and, as noted, so is the social work profession. While our intake staff goes to great lengths to meet the cultural, racial and gender orientation needs of our community, the lack of diverse individuals in our intake unit is noticeably lacking. Community members with diverse lived and work experiences are valuable assets to our Health and Human Services Department and their contributions to our CCS unit should not solely be based upon having a social work license.

The Health and Human Service Department should explore new ways to recruit and retain staff of all backgrounds as well as providing support for those who want to pursue a social work certificate or license. That said, the urgency for folks needing access to CCS services is high and the ongoing County level hiring/recruitment changes needed are slow. Reclassifying these positions is something we can address now.

Thank you all for your service to our community.

Sincerely,

Erin Rodell