



November 28, 2018

Dear Public Safety and Health Committee Members:

Thank you for taking the time to hear about the important topic of warming rooms during the winter months in Milwaukee. As you may know, Milwaukee has emergency shelters that are open year-round for those experiencing homelessness and/or fleeing domestic violence. Additionally, during the winter months it is essential to open up additional spots for people to be so that no one has to be outside in the elements.

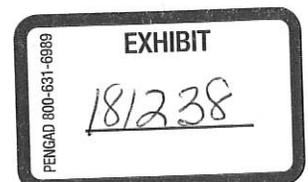
For the past 20 years, the private, nonprofit sector has taken it upon themselves to provide these spaces. The first warming room to open was Repairers of the Breach, a day shelter for those experiencing homelessness. When the temperature drops below 10 degrees, they open their doors for people to stay inside at night as well.

Nine years ago, Tippecanoe Presbyterian Church and Divine Intervention Ministries opened up their doors, regardless of temperature, from December 1-March 31 and continue to do so every year. Guest House, a local men's emergency shelter, has put extra cots in their office areas to add capacity for men in need.

About three years ago, the Milwaukee Continuum of Care- the consortium of agencies responsible for providing services to end homelessness in Milwaukee County, led by the City of Milwaukee's Community Development Grant Administration- started a Warming Room Committee to better coordinate warming room space and to recruit more partners. This year, we have seven warming room sites, all provided by private nonprofits. Those sites are: Adullam Outreach, Benedict Center, Divine Intervention/Tippecanoe Presbyterian Church, Greater New Birth Church, Guest House, Repairers of the Breach, and St. Ben's. Together, these warming rooms provide capacity for over 200 additional people who need a safe, indoor place to be during the winter nights.

The logistics of opening a warming room are perhaps more complicated than appear on the surface. To open a new warming room, the agency must consider the basic costs of what it takes to keep a space open, clean, and warm during a time when the building would not normally be occupied. The second-most sought after budget line item for all warming rooms is heating costs to heat large spaces at least 12 additional hours in the day. Other utility costs like water usage for showers, electricity, and increased garbage volume and pick up must be considered and fundraised.

The most necessary logistical piece to plan for is enough staff to make warming rooms safe and inviting to anyone who needs it. Warming rooms are traditionally low barrier, which means that people are coming in with potential behavioral health or addiction issues, and any time a large group of people gathers in one space, it is important to have staff to make sure everyone is safe. All warming rooms engage paid staff for this essential role so that they can vet and train the people in these roles. One more recent warming room, Adullam Outreach, which serves families, started with just one person. But to increase capacity and to ensure her safety and the safety of others, she now ensures a team of at least two staff every night.





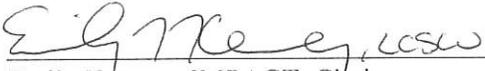
The full cost of having space, utilities, and staff to open a warming room ranges from \$15,000 for some that are relatively low-capacity and not open every night to \$50,000 for those open every winter night. All seven warming rooms have agreed to do this work, and have privately fundraised through community donations to try to make their budgets whole. We rely on volunteers to make meals and donations of hygiene supplies and sleeping bags. Every year as we are planning, the biggest unknown factor is how much money will be able to be raised.

As you well know, the cost of not providing these services is a burden on our community. First and foremost, the potential unnecessary loss of human life due to not having a warm place to go is inexcusable. Secondly, those that are seeking shelter may utilize more costly systems such as police officers or emergency rooms for warmth.

The most tangible and helpful thing this Committee and the City can do is to relieve some of the burden on us to completely privately fundraise for these essential services each year. We ask the City to consider putting into its budget a set-aside amount for warming rooms so that we can guarantee that we can continue to provide a warm place to stay overnight for those who need it each and every winter.

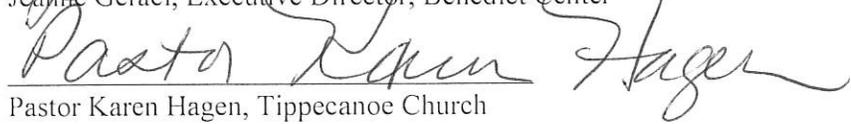
Sincerely in Gratitude,

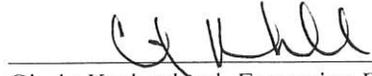
Milwaukee CoC Warming Room Committee


 Emily Kenney, IMPACT, Chair

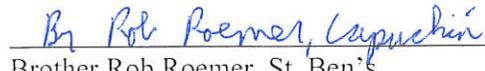

 Judy Loth, Adulham Outreach


 Jeanne Geraci, Executive Director, Benedict Center


 Pastor Karen Hagen, Tippecanoe Church


 Cindy Krahenbuel, Executive Director, Guest House


 Pastor James West, Executive Director, Repairers of the Breach


 Brother Rob Roemer, St. Ben's


 Krystina Kohler, United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties