

Jan 15, 2024

To Wheeling City Council & City Management:

We, the undersigned social service providers and advocates for people experiencing homelessness, are writing to you about the city's enforcement of the camping ban without a managed camp in place. We are requesting that you suspend enforcement of the camping ban until a managed camp is established.

As it stands, it is not possible for people experiencing homelessness to follow the camping ban. The enforcement of the ban today means that people without homes will be forced to carry all their belongings with them in shopping carts, wagons, suitcases, or whatever other items they can find to carry all of their earthly possessions. Additionally, the Winter Freeze Shelter is not able to accommodate as many people that need it. Unfortunately, there are only 50 beds available, and with over 120 unique guests between December 15th and 30th, there are clearly not adequate shelter beds available. Moreover, the Winter Freeze Shelter ends on March 15th, meaning we are 9 short weeks away from having no low barrier shelter. Without the establishment of a managed camp, people will be forced to choose which law to break: the camping ban or trespassing ordinances. There are far reaching consequences to pending citations or criminal charges when it comes to finding housing. This ordinance only places more barriers to ending homelessness. Therefore, we ask that you suspend the enforcement of the camping ban until the establishment of a managed camp.

Regardless of what we think is the best approach to solving homelessness, there are major flaws in the ban without a plan:

Like any business venture, the success of this project will require all stakeholders to:

- o Obtain land, which the city has been unable to identify,
- o Dedicate time for strategic planning,
- o Identify and procure finances,
- o Develop an operational plan,
- o Assemble a team of dedicated and hard-working professionals,
- o Hire and train staff,
- o Build the camp and facilities.

We have not had the appropriate amount of time dedicated to planning this unexpected project. Local non-profits who are willing to help have already set their budgets for the year, and without additional resources, will not be able to take on a project as large as a managed camp without assistance from the city and one another. It is irresponsible to move forward without the due diligence a project of this size requires.

Therefore, we ask that you suspend enforcement of the camping ban until a responsible plan is established. With the suspension of the ban, social service agencies and advocates will be able to come to the table with the city for constructive dialogue and strategic planning about a project as complex as a managed camp.

Sincerely,

Below is a non-exhaustive* list of Homeless Outreach Service Providers requesting that the City of Wheeling suspend enforcement of the camping ban until a managed camp is established:

Mark Phillips & Ashlie Kotson
CEO & Northern Regional Director, Catholic Charities, WV

Mark E. Brennan
Bishop of Catholic Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

Becky Shilling-Rodocker
Executive Director, Soup Kitchen of Wheeling

Mark Games, CEO Northwood Health Systems

Nic Cochran
Life Hub Employee; Recovery Coach; House of Hagar

Kate Marshall
Facilitator, House of Hagar; Executive Director, Mother Jones Center for Resilient Community; Director Uplift WV; Life Hub volunteer

Ryan Ewing; Heather Ewing; Ryan Adams; Brian Dotson; Angela Ancell Everett; Fran Pumphrey; Daniel Blake; Connor Morrison; Vincent DeGeorge
House of Hagar, Uplift WV, Life Hub Employees, Shelter Managers, & Homeless Advocates

Derek Lantz & Shelly Miller
Center Coordinator & Homeless Case Manager, Catholic Charities Neighborhood Center

Adam Giglio
Shelter Supervisor, Northwood Health Systems

Susan Brossman & Lynn Kettler
Program Managers, Street Moms

Paula Riethmiller
Program Manager, Trash Talkers

Jill Eddy
Interim CEO, Youth Services Systems, Inc.

Rev. Jeff Allen
Executive Director, WV Council of Churches

Rev. Virginia Loew-Shellhammer, MA, LPC

Amy Jo Hutchison
Economic Justice Organizer, Rattle the Windows

William Mercer, MD
Street Medicine Provider, American Public Health Association's caucus for homelessness

Crystal Bauer, RN
Street Medicine Provider, YWCA's 2018 Women to Tribute, LEDE's 2022 Person of the Year

James Comerci, MD
WVU Medicine, Vol. Director Wheeling Health Right

Steve Corder, MD
Medical Director, Northwood Health Systems

Sr. Mary Meyers CRNP, RN; William Przybysz, MD; Amanda Cummins, PA-C; Katie Roach; Thomas G. Wack, Jr. MD; Vera Barton-Maxwell, PhD, APRN, FNP-BC; Peter Bala, MD, OB/Gyn; Joe Durkalski, DO; Laura Miller, DO
Street Medicine Providers

Jim O'Connell, MD
Physician/President, Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program

Jim Withers, MD
Founder of Pittsburgh Mercy's Operation Safety Net, Board of Directors of Street Medicine Institute

Brett Feldman, PA-C
Board of Directors & Medical Director of Street Medicine Institute

Chairman & Members of the Northern Panhandle Continuum of Care Executive Board of Directors:

◦R.J. Konkoleski,
Helping Heroes, CEO

◦Claudia Raymer,
Ohio County Family Resource Network,
Executive Director

◦Julie Gomez,
NAMI Greater Wheeling, Executive Director

Janna Gordon
Executive Director, Brooke Hancock Family Resource Network; NPCoC Board of Directors' Secretary

Lori Jones
Executive Director YWCA Wheeling, Board Member at large NPCoC

*This list of service providers was organized on very short notice on a holiday weekend. Additional critical service providers and networks are organizing additional, complementary, and mutually-nonexclusive efforts/asks as well.