



November 5, 2021

Mayor Ted Wheeler

City of Portland

1221 SW 4<sup>th</sup>, Suite 340

Portland, OR 97204

cc. Commissioner Ryan, Commissioner Hardesty, Commissioner Rubio, Commissioner Mapps,

Deborah Kafoury

Multnomah County Chair

501 SE Hawthorne Blvd, Suite 600

Portland, OR 97214

cc. Commissioner Meieran, Commissioner Jayapal, Commissioner Pederson, Commissioner Stegmann

Dear Mayor Wheeler, Multnomah County Chair Kafoury, City and County Commissioners,

We write on behalf of William Temple House in support of the “Collaborative Mental Health/Peer Support Services” proposal submitted by Blanchet House of Hospitality. We understand the county and city are now collaborating on a \$38 million dollar funding package to address homelessness, a piece of which is a Collaborative Mental Health/Peer Support Service focused in and around Old Town. We are hoping this proposal will increase support to other social service agencies like ours, located in NW Portland.

Established in 1965, William Temple House is a nonprofit community-based organization in Northwest Portland serving 6,800+ people each year. Our mission is to provide food, counseling, clothing, and household items to Portland-area neighbors to strengthen our community. In addition, we operate the William Temple House Thrift Store that helps support our services.

In the past year, we have seen dramatic increase in client need(s) as the pandemic has impacted all levels of our services. Particularly, our food pantry has seen increasing weekly numbers with many individuals receiving our services presenting with high acuity mental health needs. Our pantry is serving more houseless individuals than it ever has and the needs of those coming through our doors are greater than they have been in years past. For example, just last week we saw our highest numbers ever where over 100 people in one day, our typical numbers are between 55 and 65 per day. The influx of need is causing extreme stress and strain on an already limited staffing structure. We are seeing many more incidents of violence, drug use, and escalating mental health in the clients that we serve and we know their suffering has grown deeper as the pandemic has worn on. When escalated crisis issues occur, it takes our team away from their main service function – running a food pantry and Counseling program in order to provide more specialized and focused services to the people experiencing crisis.

When considering the development of this new program, what would be most useful to us would be mental health providers and peer support specialists or crisis workers on our site Tuesday – Thursday 11am – 2pm (when our pantry is open) and on call as needed on Monday & Friday afternoons.

When building this program, we think you should consider the following:

- Types of Personnel
  - People with counseling licenses (LPC/-I, LMSW/LCSW, LMFT/-A)
  - Certified peer mentors with the lived experience of mental health recovery, and/or substance use recovery with Peer Support Specialist or Peer Wellness Specialist certifications
  - Staff with extensive crisis de-escalation skills and experience (people with backgrounds in hospitals, crisis centers, etc.)
  - Staff with lived experience of systems oppression or houselessness
  - Supervisors should have the highest level of license and certification – one for clinical staff and one for peer support staff
  
- Core Competencies
  - Commitment to equity and understanding of systemic racism and oppression and their effects on BIPOC
  - A deep understanding of economic injustice and the ways systems contribute to poverty
  - A thorough understanding of public safety – what is safe vs. what is uncomfortable as well as a deep knowledge of Oregon laws and policies regarding hospitalization, crime, and when systems-level intervention is unavoidable
  - An understanding of resources in Portland and the tenacity to make connections with those organizations
  
- Training & Development
  - Ongoing debrief sessions and root cause analysis trainings
  - Advanced de-escalation training should be provided (the ideal candidates will have a moderate level of training and experience around crisis response and de-escalation already).
  - Opportunity to advance and grow through learnings about non-profit practice and services (ideal candidates will have a lot of lived experience as a client or as a person receiving services but will likely need/want formalized training regarding being a provider)

We at William Temple House urge you to fund the development of Collaborative Mental Health/Peer Support Service. It would have incredible benefits to our community, where many people are deeply suffering. This project will help mitigate crisis situations, increase harm reduction responses; reduce reliance on Portland Police Bureau or BHU during crisis events, create fewer disruptions to service delivery, improve safety and build a more positive experience for client and community members. Lastly, provisions such as these will aid in building longevity and resilience in the staff and service providers in your city. Such longevity ensures that tenured and seasoned staff continue to support

the Portland community, bringing better results for clients and social services agencies as we work to support some of Portland's most vulnerable residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carrie Hoops".

Carrie Hoops, Executive Director (503-715-0203; email: [choops@williamtemple.org](mailto:choops@williamtemple.org))

Brooke White, Director of Training and Clinical Services

Kevin Ryan, Director of Social Services

Madison Reiling-Mullins, Director of Operations