



Minnesota Department of **Human Services**

August 31, 2015

Councilmember Bill Finney, Ward 7
Offices of the Saint Paul City Council
Ramsey County Courthouse/City Hall
15 Kellogg Boulevard West, Suite 310
Saint Paul, MN 55102-1615

**SUBJECT: ST. PAUL CITY COUNCIL VOTE ON THE DIANE AHRENS CRISIS
RESIDENCE**

Dear Councilmember Finney:

I am writing in support of People Incorporated's plan to move the Diane Ahrens Crisis Residence from its current home in the St. Paul's Hamline-Midway neighborhood to a vacant former convent on the East Side.

The Diane Ahrens Crisis Residence provides short-term stays for up to sixteen adults with mental health illnesses — such as depression, anxiety or bipolar disorder — who are having a difficult time but don't require hospitalization. Mental health crisis programs are not a new model, but instead one built on researched best practices and many years of experience, and are good neighbors in communities across the state.

But there aren't enough beds to meet the needs of Minnesota. We know we need more mental health crisis programs, including in Ramsey County. This spring, the Governor and legislature appropriated funds to expand programs just like this, one piece of more than \$50 million in new investments to expand mental health services. But, increased funding, by itself, is not enough to meet our needs. We need welcoming communities.

One in five people suffer from mental illness at some point in their lives. These individuals are not strangers; they are family members and relatives, friends and neighbors- they are "us". In order to treat and care for people with mental illness, Minnesota needs a range of services, especially services offered in the community where people have access to a safe, pleasant, home-like environment.

We can all understand having questions and concerns about something new coming into our neighborhood. However, let me assure everyone that these concerns about the Diane Ahrens Crisis Residence are unfounded. Only five percent of violent crimes are committed by people with severe mental illness, and then typically by someone NOT in treatment. We know it has been reported that

Hamline University officials (next to the present location of the facility) said that the Ahrens Residence has been a good neighbor, with no security issues noted. People Incorporated has a long history of offering top-notch mental health services to the community.

We know that People Incorporated's Diane Ahrens Crisis Residence will be a good neighbor to the residents of the East Side, and we also know that it will be an important service to people in that community and across the city. We appreciate the support for people with mental illness that the St Paul City Council has shown in the past. As a long time St. Paul resident, I value our city's past commitment. As Commissioner of Human Services, I ask the council to support the city's planning commission recommendation to approve the treatment center's request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lucinda E. Jesson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lucinda" being more prominent than the last name "Jesson".

Lucinda E. Jesson
Commissioner

Cc: Mayor Coleman