

January 8, 2018

To whom this may concern,

I am writing to you today not only as a parent of an adult child who has a substance use/mental health disorder, but also as a concerned citizen hoping and praying the “powers at be” can once and for all decide to prioritize issues and put the immediate needs of families of this community first. I am specifically referring to the ongoing crisis of drug abuse which is happening right in our own backyards. We can turn our backs and pretend it’s not there or “will never happen to my children/family,” or we can stop the blame and shame and begin to truly take a humanitarian and aggressive stand against this disease that affects so many. First, we can begin to seriously look at the statistics which state that “In 2006, .5 people per 100,000 residents or 2 people in 2006, died from drug overdose. In contrast, in 2015, 4.9 per 100,000 residents or 10 people in 2015 died of drug overdose. That’s an 850% increase for heroin deaths alone from 2005 to 2016 and the numbers are on the rise.

We know this crisis is not going away anytime soon and we also know we can make a more concentrated effort to contribute what we can to try and stop this epidemic! Unfortunately, there is still a stigma attached, on the behalf of perhaps well intended people, but certainly uninformed citizens, who do not want to deal with drug addicts in their communities. I never dreamed that my daughters would become drug addicts-never! But they did. One daughter fortunately received inpatient treatment-not in WI, but Rockford IL. We couldn’t afford the out of pocket costs in our state. Even local hospitals like Roger’s Memorial Hospital wouldn’t accept our then insurance. Even as recently as five months ago we tried so hard to get my other daughter into an inpatient treatment facility but continuously was turned down because of her state insurance program. She finally went to Roger’s and self-advocated, stating, “I want to stop coming here every year! I want serious help! I am ready and it’s your job to help me find the help I so desperately need!” She was told prior to this that to completely recover, she would need inpatient therapy for 30 or more days, yet our state of WI could not provide a program where her state insurance would cover the costs. What does that say about our priorities? Are we truly in the business to help our most treasured souls? Our dear children?

This brings me to the main position of this letter and that is the proposed rezoning of the LSS parcel of land at the Bluemound Road location from manufacturing to institutional. If the board approves the rezoning of this parcel, LSS can expand their program to a 22- bed treatment center where they would be able to provide two levels of much needed treatment to those suffering from drug/alcohol addiction. By approving this rezoning, the board would enable people to have the opportunity to receive both residential and medically monitored treatment options. We as the family members of people who suffer with substance abuse disorders implore you to approve the rezoning of the LSS property at Bluemound Road. This decision will potentially benefit so many people. Alcohol and drug addicts who truly want to improve their lives, get better, yet have limited resources to do so, might truly be given that last ditch opportunity to get and stay sober at a facility where state insurance is accepted and the rest of the out of pocket costs are affordable. Consider the daily cost of inpatient treatment at a place

like Roger's Memorial Hospital-approximately \$3,000 per day, which is not affordable for the average person. To me this is a "no brainer" decision and rests on your shoulders. Do we really want to hear about one more fatality in Waukesha County due to drug overdose or a success story because the rezoning of this facility was approved which improved the lives of so many suffering people and their families? Finally, I wish to add that I speak for many families who have had to suffer through the incredible stress, worry, desperation, and insanity of this illness. I have not had to deal with the death of a loved one due to overdose, but know many who have. My daughters attended a funeral recently of a 24 year- old friend who died of a heroin overdose. My daughter called me after the funeral sobbing and said, "Mom, I love you so much and I don't ever want you to have to go through burying my sister or I." She further said, "I am going to work as hard as I can every day to stay sober and away from drugs." We as a community can help make our children's wishes for sobriety come true by voting to rezone this property so this much needed treatment option can become a reality.

I am also very proud to report that as of today, my daughter is in treatment, living in a sober living house in Waukesha and doing very well by attending meetings, working with a sobriety coach, and having a sponsor. I am so happy to say she is clean and sober today! Think of how your decision could benefit so many who simply cannot afford these out of pocket costs. Let's work together to end this terrible epidemic that is ending the lives of so many.

Thank you for your time!

Cathy Stewart

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