

## Comments on the DRAFT 2014 Letter to the Governor

### **Zeb Beilke-McCallum:**

#1.

Criminalizing Homelessness is costly, ineffective and infringes on Human Rights. Penalizing people experiencing homelessness tends to create additional obstacles to their exit from homelessness. Therefore we urge the governor to take leadership role in finding alternatives to criminalization and opposing efforts to further criminalize homelessness.

#2.

Multiple studies have shown that preventing homelessness is one of the most cost effective methods for ending homelessness. Sometimes tenants can face eviction for the simple act of calling the police. This is why we join a diverse list of organizations including the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Iowa ACLU and the Iowa Landlords Association in asking the Governor to support legislation to protect the rights of residents, tenants and landlords to summon the police and emergency assistance without penalty.

### **Julie Bockenstedt:**

I have two thoughts on the prioritized bulleted list and offer my suggestions.

- increase availability of housing units and provide rent assistance for low-income households.
- add a check-box option to Iowa Income Tax 1040 form, asking individuals to contribute [a specified dollar amount or amount choices] to homelessness services in their region;
- secure adequate funding and resources to address domestic violence and mental illness leading to homelessness; and
- continue to provide leadership in convening key agencies and individuals to assess federal funding opportunities and to increase state funding for homeless programs.

Here is my reasoning: Because our mission is ending homelessness, it makes sense to me to request an increase in affordable housing as a first priority. I'd recommend that the priority regarding a check-box option be written in a stronger voice (asking individuals to contribute rather than asking them to consider whether they would like to contribute) and specify a dollar amount or dollar amount choices. Of course I like the idea of adequate funding for DV and mental illness, but would recommend that we tie the requested funding directly to the homeless population (or, tie it specifically to homelessness prevention). Finally, I'd recommend removing the word "possibly" before "increase state funding".

Lastly, and please note that I think DV and mental illness are very important, but putting them first on the list and affordable housing last on the list feels like a "housing ready" instead of "housing first" philosophy.

**David Binner:**

Since we are considering possible additions, I would like to make another recommendation that coincides with some previous discussions we had on affordability of housing. Here is my recommendation:

For heads of households (21 years or older), or possibly those filing jointly, increasing the minimum wage to at least \$8.00 per hour, and introduce a tax credit or other tax incentive to mitigate a portion of the impact to small businesses (with low profit margins) that are creating jobs. This would assist in reducing the number households beneath the poverty rate and bridge a portion of the gap to accommodate improved affordable housing for homeless or those at risk of being homeless.