**Suggested Subject Line: More funds needed for Homelessness Solutions**

Dear Spokane City Council President Breean Beggs and Members Kate Burke, Michael Cathcart, Betsy Wilkerson, Lori Kinnear, Candace Mumm and Karen Stratton,

As the temperatures dip below freezing and Spokane’s COVID-19 case numbers, hospitalizations and deaths continue to rise, **it has come to my attention that we do not have enough low-barrier shelter beds for the unsheltered men and women in our community.**

I appreciate that the city has opened the Salvation Army 55 Mission facility, will soon re-open the remodeled Cannon Street shelter and added 120 low-barrier shelter beds when the first snow began to fall. However, even with the addition of all of these beds, Spokane will still only have 503 low-barrier shelter beds for unsheltered individuals vs. the 1,559 community members experiencing homelessness, resulting from the January 2020 Point in Time Count.

The Spokane Police Department and the Illegal Camping POD continues to “sweep” unsheltered individuals by telling them to “move along” and find alternative shelter, although ALL of the low-barrier shelter beds are FULL every night. These individuals also do not have places to go during the day when many of the shelters close, and are also told to “move along,” when there is no place that is acceptable for them to sit and rest. This practice does not solve or reduce the problem of homelessness; rather it repeatedly traumatizes unsheltered individuals and creates an impossibility of existence where it unconstitutionally punishes them for conducting life-sustaining activities and criminalizes their existence as homeless individuals.

Further CDC guidance issued during the pandemic directs cities to not disrupt homeless encampments to reduce the potential for infectious disease spread. The CDC recommends that restrooms, hand washing facilities and trash disposal be provided to these encampments.

As winter temperatures continue to fall, more unsheltered individuals will seek inside shelter. Further, as the economic consequences of the pandemic continue to emerge, many state agencies estimate the homeless population will increase as a result of inevitable evictions.

**I urge the Spokane City Council to allocate additional funds in the 2021 City of Spokane Budget to secure more low-barrier shelter beds and day centers and provide sanctioned places where those experiencing homelessness can set up tents and/or park their vehicles, without fear of being “swept.**

Thank you for your consideration of this important city issue.

Sincerely,