



Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

Supervisor Peggy Romo West, District 12

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Supervisor Romo West Applauds County Executive's Efforts to End "Chronic Homelessness" But She Says Abele Has Done Little or Nothing to Help "Situational Homelessness"

As temperatures in the Milwaukee area have hovered in the single digits, Milwaukee County Supervisor Peggy Romo West today said that County Executive Chris Abele's effort to end "chronic" homelessness was laudable, but she added that "he needs to step up his game," adding that Abele's efforts have "fallen far short of providing shelter to the 'situationally homeless' who are suffering in the cold.

"It was the County Board that provided \$300,000 for homeless shelters in this year's budget after Abele deleted the funding in his proposed budget," Romo West said. "The County Board has taken a leadership role in assisting the homeless, especially the 'situationally homeless.' While the County Executive has committed to ending 'chronic homelessness,' that is only a portion of the number of actual homeless people in Milwaukee County. There are hundreds of 'situationally' homeless people that are currently seeking shelter and Abele has done little to help them."

She said that beginning in 2013 homeless shelters were hit by federal budget cuts, and the County Board stepped in to restore the funding.

Romo West said that the County 211 line has reported about 200 families are currently on the wait list for shelter. She said that about one-third of homeless people – fewer than 500 – are "chronically" homeless. The rest, she said, are "situationally" homeless and need shelter immediately.

"I shudder to think of what would have happened if the County Board had not provided funding for homeless shelters in this year's budget," she said. "Hundreds of people are seeking shelter from these frigid temperatures because of circumstances beyond their control. Our existing shelters are filled to capacity and we are working with local churches to provide warmth to those who have nowhere to go.

"Ending chronic homelessness is a goal we can all share, but the fact is there are people who have nowhere to go because of their circumstances. These 'situationally' homeless people need the shelters to get through the circumstances that made them homeless."

Romo West said she is grateful to churches and other groups that have set up warming stations, but she said more needs to be done to help those who do not have shelter from the cold. Romo West urged those in need of shelter or other resources to call 211.

"The need for shelters is great," she said. "No one should be forced to spend the night in the frigid cold, even after temperatures begin to warm up later this week. I thank all of the churches and organizations that have sought to alleviate the problem, but there are not enough shelters for those who are situationally homeless."

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