

Craig, Sondra

From: Margaret Ho <margyho@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 26, 2024 10:43 AM
To: ZZ Council Members
Cc: Laurie Cooper Stoll
Subject: Statement of Support for Re-Zoning the REACH Center

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To the La Crosse City Council,

I strongly support the petition to re-zone the REACH Center to provide Traditional Neighborhood Development zoning. The re-zoning would allow the REACH Center to continue providing centralized social services to La Crosse citizens including housing navigation support, homeless prevention, and mental health and healthcare.

The REACH Center has served nearly 2,000 community members since it opened, including 571 people who were able to maintain housing with the REACH Center's support. The partnership of service organizations within the REACH Center makes it possible for an individual to walk in the doors and receive immediate wrap-around, coordinated support for multiple areas of need. This model is most impactful for individuals who often face financial barriers, transportation barriers, and social barriers that limit their access to services.

Importantly, re-zoning will make it possible for the REACH Center to add dental suites to the facility. This will allow the REACH Center's partner Scenic Bluffs Community Health Centers to provide dental care to La Crosse citizens who receive BadgerCare benefits. Since I moved to the La Crosse area in 2016, I have worked in social service positions supporting individuals with BadgerCare benefits. Dental care is the one service that I most struggled to connect them with. Per a [2022 Wisconsin Dentist Workforce Report](#) published by the Department of Health Services, only 36% of Wisconsin Badgercare members received a single dental service in 2018. Only 24% of Wisconsin dentists report serving Badgercare patients, over 50% of these dental providers plan on leaving the workforce in the next 10 years (Davis & Hang, 2022).

This report demonstrates that Wisconsin is experiencing a healthcare crisis with access to dental services. Individuals with financial struggles also often experience transportation challenges. This makes it challenging to access even local dental providers and unfeasible to travel to the Cashton Scenic Bluffs location to receive dental care. The REACH Center is in an accessible location, and with the support of the La Crosse City Council to re-zone, the REACH Center will also be able to provide needed health and dental services to the area. Please consider supporting the re-zoning and improving access to services for La Crosse area residents.

Sincerely,

Margaret Ho

Davis L, Hang M. Wisconsin Dentist Workforce Report, 2/23/2022. Wisconsin Oral Health Program, Wisconsin Department of Health Services. Publication number P-03204.