

March 11, 2021

re: Interfaith letter supporting bold leadership to reduce homelessness this year

Dear Governor Cox:

With the passage of HB 347 in the Utah Legislature, and Congress's approval of American Rescue Plan Act, now is the time for Utah to take bold action to reduce homelessness. As leaders from different faith traditions we challenge you to take stock of the opportunities created by new state and federal investments in housing stability. Specific ideas we would like to ask you to consider include:

1. Using new state funding and/or funding in the American Rescue Plan Act to purchase underutilized motels and convert their rooms into permanent housing so that every person who is currently sleeping outdoors can be offered a home.
2. Identify how to best use new housing vouchers coming to Utah through the American Rescue Plan Act so that we are ready to act when they become available.
3. Expand Utah's ability to provide case management and other services to people who are transitioning out of homelessness by adding those services to Utah's state plan for Medicaid in the quickest way possible.
4. Set clear goals for reducing homelessness for families with children so that children are not left out of progress made this year despite all the research showing that homelessness harms children's health and development.

We would love to discuss these ideas with you and the person you choose to be the Coordinator for Utah's new Office of Homeless Services. We are eager to work with you to help our state make dramatic progress in reducing homelessness this year and to completely eliminate it in future years.

Sincerely,

The Rt. Rev Scott B. Hayashi, Bishop for the Episcopal Diocese of Utah

Bishop Karen Oliveto, Mountain Sky Area of the United Methodist Church

Rev. Monica Dobbins, First Unitarian Church, Salt Lake City

Rev. William Germundson, St. Francis of Assisi Christian Church (DOC)

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801-364-7765



Rev. Christine Higuera-Street,, St. Matthew's Lutheran Church

Rev. Kim James. Ogden First United Methodist Church

Pastor Bruce Kolasch, Elim Lutheran Church, Ogden

Father Elias Koucos, Greek Orthodox Church

Rev. Elizabeth McVicker, District Superintendent, Utah/Western Colorado, Mountain Sky Conference, United Methodist Church

Rev. Anita Miner, All Saints Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City

Rev. David Nichols, Mount Tabor Lutheran Church, ELCA, Salt Lake City

Pastor Curtis Price, First Baptist Church, Salt Lake City

Rev. Catherine Putnam-Netto, Presbytery of Utah

Pastor Dave Sauer, Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Brigham City

Rev. Christopher T. Scuderi of Universal Heart Ministry

Rev. Dr. Leslie Whited, CEO, MOSAIC Inter-Faith Ministries

Rev. Lora Young, Minister, South Valley Unitarian Universalist Society