

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement on Concerns at Providence Milwaukie Hospital

One day into the new year, an incident involving a community member in distress unfolded on TriMet route #75 in Milwaukie near the Providence Milwaukie hospital. While a hospital security guard escorted the woman onto the bus, it has not yet been confirmed that she was a patient at the hospital. However, this incident along with the devastating loss of Jean M. Descamps in December, contribute to broader questions about the accessibility and responsiveness of an already strained healthcare system. I share a growing concern that some facilities, like Providence Milwaukie, are struggling to meet critical needs within our most vulnerable communities.

Our community relies on these institutions to provide timely and effective care, especially in acute and urgent situations. It's crucial that our healthcare system continues to evolve and improve, especially in how they respond to emergency care needs within unhoused populations. I am concerned about any potential gaps in this system and am committed to working collaboratively with healthcare providers to address these issues.

Over the past year the Milwaukie Police Department proactively included a Behavioral Health Specialist in their response which significantly improved their capability to assess and appropriately redirect cases from a criminal justice system outcome towards more suitable shelter or services. Nevertheless, in critical care situations, police officers are not equipped to act as emergency medical providers. When medical care is required, it is essential that such services are readily available and accessible by all our residents.

This issue extends beyond Milwaukie and our region. Our healthcare, social service, and public safety systems nationwide are facing significant strain. As one of two city councilors working closely with Clackamas County on the development of the county's first crisis stabilization center, which will be located in Milwaukie, I am deeply invested in ensuring our critical care infrastructure is robust and responsive. It is essential that our entire system is equipped to deal with situations of substance use and/or behavioral health crises with the appropriate level of care and compassion. Redirection or refusal of critical emergency services for any population is unacceptable.

Reference Articles:

<https://www.oregonlive.com/crime/2024/01/trimet-bus-driver-said-he-felt-forced-by-guard-at-providence-milwaukie-hospital-to-pick-up-woman-in-crisis.html>

<https://www.oregonlive.com/crime/2024/01/providence-milwaukie-staff-thought-man-was-faking-symptoms-didnt-do-drug-screen-before-he-died-in-police-custody-memo-says.html>

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