



Mayor Lisa Brown

January 29, 2026

Dear Representative Gregerson,

Thank you for your work to create a statewide standard for the enforcement of local laws regulating the use of public property. The City of Spokane shares your goal of ensuring a local and statewide commitment of providing housing and appropriate services as an alternative to merely criminalizing people who may be unhoused.

Like most cities across the state, the City of Spokane has public property regulations that prohibit unpermitted camping on public property. Importantly, however, under the City's ordinance, an officer may assist a person to emergency housing, crisis stabilization, treatment services, or medical care instead of enforcing the ordinance through citation or arrest. Additionally, an officer may help an individual to a day center such as the City of Spokane's Day Navigation Center. There, individuals can access mental health care, addiction treatment, housing placement, employment services, and primary care services. We believe providing a variety of services, interventions, and specialized shelter sites - and navigating individuals to the most appropriate options - is integral to addressing the diverse needs of our residents, housed and unhoused, who may be violating our community's public property regulations.

Over the last two years, the City of Spokane has taken a suite of actions under our HOME Starts Here initiative that is proving successful in navigating people to housing and other important interventions:

- We've invested millions of dollars in affordable housing units and services through the City's HEART Fund, funded by the local sales and use tax authorized by the legislature under HB 1590 (2019-2020);
- We've implemented a coordinated citywide, peer-supported outreach program designed to meet the immediate needs of our unhoused residents by connecting them to emergency shelter, housing, and other critical services. This outreach program coordinates the City's efforts under the Rights-of-Way Safety Initiative administered by the Department of Commerce;
- We've established a specialized shelter site system in partnership with non-profit and faith-based organizations that has proven to be effective in navigating individuals and families to transitional and permanent housing; and
- We've expanded our co-deployed teams that successfully divert individuals in crisis from the emergency room and criminal justice system to appropriate services.

A Better Way Starts Here

808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd. • Spokane, Washington 99201-3335
Phone: 509.625.6250 FAX: 509.625.6563



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Data from our Longitudinal Systems Analysis shows that this “all of the above” approach is improving the lives of our residents who are or were previously unhoused.

Measure	2024	2025	+/-
Individuals Served	7,221	6,430	11% ↓
Percent of Individuals Exiting to Permanent Housing	22%	29%	31.8% ↑
Percent of Individuals exiting emergency shelter to permanent housing	7%	13%	85.7% ↑
Returns to the System in first 130 days	7%	4%	42.9 % ↓
Percent of Individuals Exiting PSH to Permanent Housing (independent)	37%	57%	54% ↑

We are grateful for the State partnership and investments, such as eviction prevention funding, and strongly urge the legislature to maintain and expand these investments, wherever possible. The City of Spokane is utilizing every tool provided to us by the state legislature to build housing and provide appropriate services.

We are concerned that HB 2489’s narrow definition of “adequate alternative shelter space” as a prerequisite for the enforcement of public property regulations overlooks other critically important interventions that may better address the individual needs of the person who may be violating public property regulations. I would welcome the opportunity to share ways the bill may better achieve the legislative intent of implementing evidence-based solutions.

Sincerely,

Lisa Brown

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