

# **With COVID-19 are we leaving some of Milwaukee's most vulnerable out in the cold?**

**Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan  
March 19, 2020**

The global COVID-19 pandemic is forcing communities to take key protective measures, especially social distancing and asking people to stay at home.

But what is happening with people who don't have a home? How are we handling our vulnerable homeless when it comes to COVID-19?

Is our homeless population in a COVID-19 "blind spot" and thus a serious threat to the greater population should the virus spread, unchecked, among homeless individuals and groups?

We cannot ignore the fact that the virus has proven to be very easily transmissible and has caused planning, protocols and developments to change almost on an hour-to-hour timeline. Many of our homeless already have chronic health problems and compromised immune systems, yet we are not hearing much of anything from city officials about steps being taken to protect them from the COVID-19 threat.

Because of the silence, I have asked the Health Department and other city and county agencies for details about strategies and specifics to protect Milwaukee's homeless.

Now I will admit that it is easy to succumb to the "out of sight, out of mind" viewpoint when it comes to the homeless. However, we must be asking:

Are we taking steps to encourage or ensure social distancing among the homeless?

How high of a priority is the city making securing temporary, separated housing or shelter for the homeless (having large numbers of homeless individuals bunched cheek to jowl in "warming rooms" and shelter spaces is seen as very dangerous/risky, as the virus can quickly spread in common areas where numerous individuals are congregating)?

We are hearing how important it is for each of us to maintain the "chain of prevention" to ensure we reduce the chances of infecting our families, neighbors, coworkers and others with COVID-19.

But we are all in danger if just one link in the chain is broken, and that is why I am focused on making sure our homeless are included in our overall plans to fight this deadly virus.