October 30, 2017

Statement to the Dane County Board about League support of programs to reduce the population of the Dane County jail and to improve services to inmates.

The League of Women Voters of Dane County supports the $100,000 allocated in the County Executive’s proposed budget to study gaps in the county’s mental health services and the potential for a crisis restoration center, where people in mental health and AODA crises could be stabilized without being jailed. We also support the $110,000 expansion of re-entry services for previously incarcerated individuals.

The League supports expansion of programs to keep non-dangerous individuals out of the jail. These would include deferred prosecution programs and enhanced community services such as housing, job placement, and mental health treatment for inmates who could safely be released to the community pending trial if they had those services. Creative bail options for prisoners who do not have the financial resources to meet standard bail amounts for their offense could reduce the jail population somewhat. In addition, many Huber inmates could remain in the community on electronic monitoring without endangering the community, rather than returning to the jail in the evening.

The League also supports closure of the outdated and inhumane jail cells on the 6th and 7th floors of the City County Building at the earliest possible time, and the plans to make more room for mental health, medical, and educational services for jail inmates in the Public Safety Building.

Sincerely,

Brook Chase Soltvedt
President