



June 10, 2020

Letter of Support

Dear Whatcom County Council and the Office of the County Executive,

We are writing to express our support for the proposal to relocate the Drop-in Center operated by Lighthouse Mission Ministries to 1530 Cornwall and the home of the previous Public Market. We applaud the collective community response and partnership that occurred at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic to rapidly move the Drop-In Center to Bellingham High School. We also understand the significant urgency to find a more semi-permanent location and the sizable commitment of resources and time required on the part of Whatcom County to do so. We can attest that this is an important investment to the overall health and well-being of our community.

We had the opportunity to tour operations at Bellingham High School in April and work alongside those involved in planning and operations and have been impressed by what we've seen. We have observed solid infection prevention practices, a calm atmosphere for clients, and improved social distancing. These achievements would have been nearly impossible at the previous home of the Drop-In Center and going back would be unacceptable. We have been closely following community discussions about siting a new location and understand the difficulty in finding the ideal site under these circumstances. The existing vacant building at the 1530 Cornwall site has several positive features including the structure itself as it will provide more adequate winter sheltering capacity and the proximity to transportation and vital services downtown for those seeking shelter.

As the sole hospital serving Whatcom County, you have our full support for this proposed move. Maintaining social distancing throughout the duration of this pandemic while also providing shelter for some of our most vulnerable community members must be at the top of our shared health priorities. Without this focus, we will most certainly be faced with even greater challenges and suffering.

We stand ready to build on our existing collaborations with the County, the City of Bellingham, Lighthouse Mission Ministries and other key partners to ensure successful transition and operations at a new site.



Charles Prosper MSPT, MBA
Chief Executive
PeaceHealth Northwest Network



Rachel Lucy, MA
Director of Community Health
PeaceHealth Northwest Network