



Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

*Supervisor Michael Mayo, Sr.
Vice Chair, Health and Human Needs Committee
Supervisor Steve F. Taylor*

Dear Members of the Mental Health Board,

The family of Ms. Janet Johnson deserves an independent and impartial investigation into the tragic circumstances surrounding her death during the recent cold weather streak.

According to media reports, Ms. Johnson lived with a mental illness and had a series of contacts with the Milwaukee County Mental Health Complex. Recently, police found her lying in the street partially clothed in below zero temperatures. Ms. Johnson died from exposure just a few short hours later.

The media reports added that Ms. Johnson had been diagnosed with schizophrenia earlier in her life and had been had been found in a snowbank with frostbite setting in last year. Further, she had been in and out of treatment facilities, including the Mental Health Complex. She was also placed in the Milwaukee County Jail shortly before her death.

Members of the community are concerned that people with serious mental health issues continue to suffer tragic consequences in Milwaukee. We are hopeful that your attention to this matter will result in the development of a clear line of accountability for the family and the public at large.

This tragedy also represents an opportunity for the Mental Health Board to develop a protocol to address complex cases like Ms. Johnson's in the future. The public may find independent reviews, rather than department-led ones, more credible when determining whether there was a lapse in the mental health network of care. Such a demonstration of impartiality can be critical to assure the public that the close personal and professional relationships between contractors and a providers do not influence the findings of an independent investigation.

The public deserves answers regarding Ms. Johnson's death, especially because of her many interactions with the mental health system and the jail. Specifically, what steps were taken by the jail, the Department of Health and Human Services, and community providers to ensure that Ms. Johnson received a proper home placement and appropriate health care?

The public has been left with the impression that Ms. Johnson was kicked out on the street when she was clearly unable to care for herself. Your attention to this matter is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Supervisor Michael Mayo, Sr.

Supervisor Steve F. Taylor

cc: Milwaukee County Medical Examiner
Milwaukee County District Attorney
Milwaukee County Sheriff

