



September 13, 2021

Honorable Mayor Treece and Honorable Members of the City Council:

Since last winter, the Commission on Human Rights has been gathering information about Columbia's unhoused community, temperature cut-offs for emergency warming centers, and the resources required for the emergency Wabash overnight center.

With the likelihood of extreme temperature fluctuations continuing and a permanent homeless shelter not materializing for another few years, the Commission recommends that the City implement a temporary increase in cut-off temperature for the emergency overnight warming center from 9-degrees Fahrenheit to 18-degrees Fahrenheit for the upcoming winter. An 18-degree threshold is 20 percent lower than Columbia's average temperatures in January (typically our coldest month). A temporary increase would allow the City to assess the levels of staffing and resources required to determine if an 18-degree threshold would be sustainable over time.

The Commission reviewed the temperatures last winter as part of its evaluation of the issue. Last winter, if the threshold were 18-degrees instead of 9-degrees, the emergency Wabash warming center would only have been available an additional seven nights: one in December, two in January, and four in February.

The Commission understands the staffing and logistical challenges associated with providing emergency overnight warming facility in Columbia, but it believes this modest increase in services is warranted to respect the dignity of our fellow citizens who live without permanent shelter.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Amanda Hinnant, Chair
City of Columbia Commission on Human Rights