



January 5, 2022

Honorable Mayor Treece and Honorable Members of the City Council:

The Commission on Human Rights requests that the City of Columbia raise the temperature threshold for opening the emergency overnight warming center (currently at Wabash Station) from 9-degrees Fahrenheit to a more humane level. Last night, after our meeting, the temperature dropped to 18 degrees overnight. That temperature is sufficient to open emergency overnight warming centers in Lawrence, KS (threshold 35 degrees), St. Peters, MO (threshold 20 degrees), or Huntsville, AL (threshold 32 degrees), but presently insufficient for Columbia.

Since our previous report on this topic, federal agencies have confirmed that raising the temperature threshold would not imperil federal funds. We understand that volunteer teams have provided staffing support to help meet needs at Wabash Station. The Commission suggests exploring a formal contractual relationship with interested organizations to provide a more secure staffing solution as this is a recurring need.

With winter temperatures upon us, this is a matter of life or death for our unsheltered citizens suffering from severe health problems that make them ineligible for other emergency shelters. A small change in policy will make a world of difference.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Amanda Hinnant, Chair  
City of Columbia Commission on Human Rights