



**January 3, 2026**

**To: Members of the Dane County Board of Supervisors  
and County Executive Melissa Agard**

**Fr: A.J. Nino Amato, Emertius, UW-Board of Regents & UW-Hospital Board  
Dane Co. Board of Supervisors Candidate, District 15 – Spring Election**

As a healthcare professional and mental health advocate, and a former member of the UW-Hospital and Clinic Authority Board, I would like to express grave concern regarding the failed extension of Dane County’s partnership with Tellurian Behavioral Health and the resulting disruption of emergency detoxification services.

This outcome was avoidable and reflects preventable failures in leadership, poor fiscal management, and costly operational decision-making within the Dane County Health and Human Services Department.

**Social Impact: Disruption of Care for Individuals in Crisis**

The loss of Dane County-supported detoxification services has significantly reduced access to appropriate care for individuals experiencing substance-use and mental health crises. These individuals will now have to be transported to hospital emergency rooms or detained in local jail settings while awaiting stabilization – which are not designed to safely manage behavioral issues, and increasing the physical risk to ER patients, first responders, and emergency room staff.

**Economic Impact: Cost Shifting Rather Than Fiscal Leadership**

Dane County HHS leadership has justified its actions by citing fiscal constraints amid Dane County’s projected \$31 million structural budget deficit. However, eliminating short-term detox services does not reduce costs; it shifts them.

These costs are now shifted to emergency room utilization, overtime costs for law enforcement, and extended police travel to a detox facility located eighty miles north of Madison. These downstream costs will now have to be paid by local municipalities, emergency services, and Dane County taxpayers.

## **Workforce Displacement and System Strain**

The breakdown in negotiations displaced approximately twenty-five trained behavioral health professionals, further weakening and already strained treatment workforce. Workforce instability undermines continuity of care and increases long-term recruitment and training issues and increased costs.

## **Leadership and Financial Management Deficiencies**

Public timelines and newspaper statements indicate a breakdowns in communication, unilateral revisions to board-approved terms, and rigid administrative deadlines by Dane County's HHS Director. These preventable actions raise serious concerns regarding leadership judgment, contract administration procedures, and questionable fiscal management practices within Dane County HHS.

## **Call to Action: Independent Review and Corrective Recommendations**

I respectfully call on the Dane County Board of Supervisors and County Executive Agard to authorize a comprehensive, independent, third-party review of Dane County Human Services.

This review must include: - Fiscal management practices and internal budget controls, contract oversight, and compliance. It also brings into question HHS decision-making processes and communication protocols, which warrant a comprehensive review of HHS leadership team and staff financial-management competencies

Government accountability and competent fiscal stewardship are essential to restore public trust in Dane County's HHS Department, to ensure that cost containment does not come at the expense of human dignity, public safety, or increase taxpayer funding.

Thank you for your consideration, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or care to discuss.

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Respectfully,

A.J. Nino Amato

Emeritus, UW-Hospital & Clinic Authority Board & UW-Board of Regents

Candidate, Dane County Board of Supervisors, District 15 – Spring 2026

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