

CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE

"A World Class City"

Human Rights Commission

P.O. Box 911 · Charlottesville, Virginia 22902

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www.charlottesville.gov/963/Human-Rights-Commission



November 24, 2021

Jayson Whitehead, Executive Director
PACEM
P.O. Box 14
Charlottesville, Virginia 22902

Sent via email and first-class mail

Dear Mr. Whitehead:

The Human Rights Commission asks Premier Circle to change its policy regarding “high-risk status” when deciding eligibility for shelter.

We understand that Premier Circle uses the CDC’s list of conditions that leave people vulnerable to COVID. However, PACEM does not include one of the CDC’s listed conditions: substance abuse disorder. The CDC says that having a substance use disorder (such as alcohol, opioid, or cocaine use disorder) can make you **more likely to get severely ill from COVID-19.**^[1]

Your consideration of all CDC recognized conditions, save one, is profoundly harmful to individuals experiencing lack of shelter and raises significant issues about anti-discrimination laws. Excluding substance abuse disorder leaves some of our most vulnerable community members at severe risk of homelessness.

The protections of Fair Housing anti-discrimination law apply to many people addicted to alcohol, and to those with the disease of addiction who have not recently used illegal substances. The Charlottesville Human Rights Commission recommends that you revise Premier Circle eligibility to include "substance abuse disorder" in your list of criteria.

We are grateful you are open to revising current policy and that you are meeting with Partner for Mental Health to discuss doing so. Because the protections of Fair Housing anti-discrimination law attach to people addicted to alcohol, and to those with the disease of addiction who have not recently used illegal substances, the Charlottesville HRC is hopeful that you will revise Premier Circle eligibility to include these individuals, as substance use disorder is on the CDC high risk list.

Please feel free to contact me by email at bauerma@charlottesville.gov or by phone at 470-606-9307 to discuss these matters. The temperature has fallen well below freezing the past several evenings, and thus this matter is of grave concern to the Commission.

Sincerely,

Mary Bauer

Mary Bauer
Chair, Human Rights Commission

^[1] <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>

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