

For Immediate Release

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Close the Workhouse Campaign Calls on Lyda Krewson, Lewis Reed, and the Board of Aldermen to Make Good on Their Promise

On July 17, the 28-0 unanimous vote by the Board of Aldermen (BoA) and the subsequent signing of Ordinance 71217 by Mayor Lyda Krewson was a historic moment. This was a moment when the people of St Louis, a coalition of people across race and class, joined together to demand the closure of a hellhole jail that has terrorized generations of Black and Brown people. This was a demand that our elected officials re-envision what public safety looks like and invest in our communities.

In the 119 days since Ordinance 71217 was signed into law, nothing has been done by the BoA in their oversight role to ensure the Workhouse closes, nor has Mayor Lyda Krewson held her administration to account for failing to take the necessary steps to close the Workhouse by December 31st. And today, nine alderpersons stood in the way of progress, going against their votes in July. But this campaign will not be deterred. The people of this city who protested, tweeted, called, emailed and demanded change will not be stopped. We demand the Workhouse be closed.

Upon passage of the ordinance in July, President Lewis Reed emphasized that “this is not a symbolic gesture, this is as real as it gets.” If that is true, now is the time to publicly reassert his commitment to closing the Workhouse in 2020 and rally BoA members to get this done. That has not happened. Since our elected officials have failed to honor the commitment they made in July, we demand the Workhouse be defunded through a supplemental appropriation process. NOW.

A supplemental appropriation process will end all funding to the Workhouse after December 31st, 2020, and redirect all of those funds to programs the city needs desperately, like winter shelter for the unhoused and funding for services offered in a newly-created Division of Supportive Re-entry. It would also transfer employees of the Workhouse to lateral positions within the city resulting in no job loss, with the added benefit of helping to fill empty positions in the city.

We thank those at the Board of Aldermen who voted yes today and showed their commitment to re-envisioning public safety, who fight for the will of the people, and who believe in building the future we deserve.

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