Spokane, Wash., April 19, 2021- Catholic Charities has partnered with the City of Spokane to provide decades of service with exceptional outcomes to vulnerable members of our community. Last year, Catholic Charities served over 74,000 children, families, individuals, and seniors throughout Eastern Washington.

The City of Spokane held a press conference on April 19 at 12:00 pm to discuss the findings of the state auditor report related to the work of the Community, Housing, and Human Services Department.

COMMENTS ON THE WARMING CENTER CONTRACT MENTIONED IN THE AUDIT:
The City of Spokane approached Catholic Charities in November 2019 to operate a low-barrier emergency center for families experiencing homelessness. Catholic Charities initially passed on the request, but the City continued to ask CCEW to take on the task, and stressed that other providers had declined, and the public need was emergent. Catholic Charities agreed to the 495,000 contract, at the City’s request, to ensure people experiencing homelessness had a safe, dignified place to sleep. Kelly Keene, who then worked for the city and now works for Catholic Charities, was not involved in negotiations or approval of this warming center contract as his last day of employment of the City of Spokane was October 11 2019. Further, Keenen was not offered a position at Catholic Charities until months after he left the City of Spokane and this is not unusual, as CCEW has been hiring former City employees for decades.

Kelly Keenen and Dawn Kinder both serve as senior leaders at Catholic Charities after having served as directors at the City of Spokane’s Community, Housing, and Human Services Department. Catholic Charities ensured that neither participated in any contract negotiations for their first year of work at Catholic Charities, as per City ethics rules.

COMMENTS ON PRESS CONFERENCE:
- None of the current Catholic Charities senior leaders or SLIHC leaders mentioned in this report were ever contacted for an interview by the City or the State Auditors for this report. If the former city directors had been contacted, a great deal of the factual inaccuracies in this report (detailed below) could have been easily avoided.
- Findings in this report indicate that there may have been pressure from city council towards city leadership and city staff. However, no former city staff or former city council allegedly involved in said pressure were ever interviewed for this report.
• In general, City department directors do not approve contracts individually. Contracts are approved by City purchasing, City legal, signed by the administration and in most cases, approved by City Council.

• While we understand that the State Auditor’s report asserts that Mr. Keenan was involved in the contracting process for CCEW’s warming shelter, that is inconsistent with CCEW’s recollection and records. CCEW does not believe that Mr. Keenan was involved in the contracting process for CCEW’s involvement in the warming shelter and a public records request could easily verify that.

• The Auditor’s report states that in 2019 the CHHS budget was $9 million. This is inaccurate. Their budget was closer $29 million as indicated by documents on the City’s website.

• The report and the Mayor’s comments seemed to indicate that there have been no policies and procedures in place at the City around subaward management. In fact, all those policies and procedures have existed for years, have been posted on the City’s website for years.

• It was indicated at the press conference that there were no City Conflict of Interest policies or forms. This is also inaccurate as those policies have also existed at the City for years.

• In the press conference Mayor Woodward stated former City council member (Ben Stuckart) accepted donations from a sub-recipient. This is inaccurate. Mr Stuckart is available for further comment on this topic.

We strongly encourage the SAO and City of Spokane to revisit the concerns that were raised and speak directly to the involved parties in order to get accurate information. Because these inaccuracies exist and could easily be fact checked, we hope the broader report will be re-reviewed. We know the mayor and SAO are committed to transparency and accuracy.

Catholic Charities and SLIHC stands behind all of their staff and the work they do in the community. We will continue to serve the community by providing emergency shelter, housing, counseling, case management, childcare, food security, and senior services.

About Catholic Charities Eastern Washington
Catholic Charities Eastern Washington affirms the dignity of every person, partnering with parishes and the greater community to serve and advocate for those who are vulnerable, bringing stability and hope to people throughout Eastern Washington.

About Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium
The Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium (SLIHC) is a membership association that promotes the long-term availability of affordable housing in Greater Spokane.

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