



Open Letter to Mayor Johnson: Why Are You Protecting Willie Hines?

Mayor Johnson, why do you continue to protect Willie Hines, the Executive Director of HACM? For over a year we have been publicly asking for help with bed bugs, rats, black mold, abusive managers, rent mismanagement, and crime in our buildings. We have told our stories. We have shown videos. We have compiled reports. Yet you have done nothing to help us. Instead, you have stood by Hines while he has driven HACM—and our quality of life—into the ground.

You seem to know that Hines is a problem, Mr. Mayor. You used to say HACM is “[headed in the right direction](#)” and you have “[confidence in the agency’s leadership](#).” But now you’re getting Hines [yet another consultant](#). Why hire another expensive consultant if Hines is so effective? Why continue to protect Hines?

Here’s one theory. Maybe you’re letting him stay until he can max out his pension?

Hines is eligible to receive his City of Milwaukee pension once he turns 60 this December. His pension checks will be higher if he waits until March of 2025 to retire, when he’d get approximately \$137,000 per year. If he lives until 80, that’d be over 2.7 million taxpayer dollars. That’s a *very* comfortable retirement.

What about us, 12,000 low-income tenants who are predominantly elderly, Black and Brown, people with disabilities, and veterans? If only we could have comfortable retirements, too! \$2.7 million would exterminate the bed bugs at Lapham Park, provide security to stop the drug dealing at Locust Court, address the asbestos at College Court, remove the rats from Hillside, fix the heating system at Victory Manor, and repair the plumbing at Cherry Court. We could go on.

Mr. Mayor, your friend and campaign contributor has mismanaged HACM for the last 25 years. Hines has been at the helm of HACM since 1997—as Board Chair, the #2 staff, and now the #1! From the beginning, federal officials warned that he “[does not seem to possess the requisite qualifications](#).” Under his watch:

- Federal officials found \$3 million of missing money and our social security cards piled in hallways, resulting in a forensic audit.
- HACM was forced to outsource its largest program, Section 8 rent assistance—the program he was responsible for as Associate Director 2015-2022.
- Federal officials gave HACM a score of zero out of 25 for “Financial Management.”
- Properties have enormous crime rates with [thousands of police calls](#).
- We residents have suffered emotionally and physically for years.

Despite these problems, the HACM Board has never conducted a Performance Review of Hines' work. In fact, his incompetence has been rewarded. He has gotten promotions, received raises, and is now paid \$252,000/year. Why is that?

You say that problems at HACM aren't simple. We agree—hence why we successfully promoted reforms like Department of Neighborhood Services oversight and Milwaukee Police Department nuisance authority, among others. HACM needs a new culture, organizational-wide staff evaluations, new hires, improved training and supervision, internal control systems guarding against fraud, social workers, and more. However, none of that important work can happen without competent senior leadership.

Ironically, it is you who has not proposed any solutions.

- 20 months ago you were the only Milwaukee official who learned of fraud within HACM. You did nothing in response.
- 16 months ago we went public about our concerns with over 1,007 people in attendance. You did nothing.
- In January 2024, you did nothing when HACM was mandated to outsource its largest program due to mismanagement, and your office downplayed it.
- In April, you declined an invitation from College Court residents to tour their building.
- You get angry with journalists who ask you hard questions about HACM.
- You didn't fill critical vacancies on HACM's Board for 17, 14, and 9 months, respectively, until we pressured you to.
- You have done nothing in response to the HACM Board dodging us for over 6 months, while two of the four members are your nominees.
- You re-nominated Brooke VandeBerg, who for six years has done nothing about the scandals and fraud that has occurred on her watch.

We are tired of waiting. The Hmong resident on the eighth floor of Locust Court who was just beaten, robbed, and hospitalized because of ongoing security failures cannot wait. The disabled College Court resident who pays rent but cannot live in her bed bug-infested apartment cannot wait. The mother and her infant daughter at Hillside living in an unairconditioned apartment with windows that don't work, cannot wait.

What could be worth our suffering under Hines' incompetence, Mr. Mayor? Are you choosing his retirement check over our wellbeing? We understand the Board has the official power to hire/fire the Director, but everyone looks to you as the leader of our City.

It's long past time for change. We have called for new leadership. The President of the Common Council, José Pérez, has called for new leadership. We need a national search for a qualified, caring director who will put us first.

Mr. Mayor, we deserve better. Milwaukee deserves better. It may be hard to remove your friend and disrupt his retirement plans, but it needs to be done.

Sincerely,

HACM Tenants from all across Milwaukee

Derek Abdullah	Kylie Burk	Shirley Frazier
Torean Adams	Seyenoh Bzayh	Raven Gaddis
Ruthie Adams	Daiveon C.	Gabriela Galarza
Michelle Aldrige	Mickey Cartagen	Kimberly Garner
Gregory Allen	Dorothy Chalmers	Alton Garrett
Yolanda Anderson	Anita Collins	Kean Gibson
Gidget Aranda	Joyce Collins	Kelly Gibson
Darrell Ardd	Crissy Cooper	Linda Gilmer
Darlene Arnold	Ana Cordero	Clifton Glover
Gill Bailey	Carmen Cruz	Harold Glover
Horstine Bailey	Rebecca Davis	Henry Goodlow
Rhonda Baker	Gregory Davis	Cynthia Gordon
Michael Ball	Laura Davis	Frederick Grace
Berta Bankhead	Nancy Delatorre	Geneva Gray
Effie Bay	Michelle DePruet	Lyneisha Grover
Kasie Beasch	Tommy Dmanuel	Marilyn Guirau
Jeffrey Beeman	Vanessa Dodd	Robert Hacker
Andre Began	Willie Driakwater	Darren Hale
Charlene Bell	Sandra Eagle	Mary Hall
Lavette Bell	Michael Edwards	Michael Hallett
Harlana Biami	Harriet Estes Eiland	Shawn Hampton
Nicole Binns	Gary Estraytorn	Jackie Harmon
John Birt	Jacqueline Exum	William Harrell
Lakeisha Bowers	Darryl Ferguson	Milton Harris
Erma Bowie	Joyce Fleming	Tiffany Harvis
William Boyd	Patricia Ford	Gerald Heard
George Brown	Gloria Fortune	Savannah Heart-Scott

Marsha Hollie
Carmella Holloway
Earnestine Hurns
Kurt Hyneman
Tyreilla Jackson
Stuart James
Earniece Jamison
Michelle Johnson
Anita Johnson
Elnora Johnson
Shirley Johnson
Zelda Jones
Sedona Jones
Molly Jones
Barbara Jones
Eddie Jones
Steve Junior
Lakeeda Keeler
Teri King
Mike King
Catherine King
Candice Kleba
Diane Lee
Ollie Lewis
Chris Logan
Floripe Loubriel
Doreen Lundgren
John Marshall
Roshonda Matthews
Lucy McBeath
Abraham McKinney
Monique McNeal
Debra McQueen
Lenore Meeks
Dale Meisner
David Merrwether
Larry Miller
D. Miller
Sonda Miller

Leroy Miller
Shayla Milligan
Martinez Milton
Teddi Minor
Cynthia Mitchell
Marion Moore
Joe Morgan
Carmen Morocho
Carolyn Mullins
Rachel Muñoz
Vicki Nash
Sylvia Neal
Tina Neal
Henrietta Nelson
Betty Newton
Denise Neylon
Juan Ortiz
Jimmy Outlaw
Ouida Parish
Frank Parrish
Katrina Parsons
Brenda Payne
Esidro Perez
Joseph Pinto
Shavonne Pope
José R.
Rhonda Reid
Frisco Richardson
Florence Riley
Ronnie Ringold
Ana Rosa
Luis Rosado
Shariz Sabbah
Dorothy Safford
Cornelius Sawyer
Scott Schuetz
Josephine Shillcutt
Felicia Shoates
Nicole Smith

Lela Smith
Marcus Smith
Cynthia Spencer
John Stephens
Gary Strayhorn
Josephine Stuart Ramos
Karen Swift
Kesha Tate
Robin Townsend
Amanda Trepanier
Tinameri Turner
Barb Valley
Jóse Velazquez
Luz Velazquez
Jeffrey Walker
Lisa Ware
Alwiller Washington
Brian Watson
Capri Wilder
Jocelyn Wilder
Rev. Ray Wilder
Waymetta Wilkerson
Willie Williams
Mary Williams
Earlene Wilson
Leroy Wilson
Isaac Wilson
Sandrine Winters
OD Wood
Rickey Wright