

Statement in Support of Plan B

ALRC Committee Hearing June 11, 2012

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I've lived on the same block since 1978 and witnessed a lot of change on Williamson Street during that time; all of it for the better. When I first moved to the neighborhood Willy Street was home to much substandard housing and mostly businesses of a wholesale nature. There were numerous billboards, several bars but only one restaurant.

When I heard that Plan B was moving into the empty Star Photo building I was pleased since I'd expected this large space might remain empty for some time. I was also excited about having a business that catered primarily to the LGTB community. Despite the large number of gay and lesbian residents, this was a first.

I wouldn't call myself a regular customer—at my age I don't hang out at gay bars as much as I once did. I do enjoy going there occasionally for Friday night happy hour. Most often a fund-raising event brought me to Plan B—for several elected officials, candidates, and organizations such as the LGTB Business Alliance, OPEN and Fair Wisconsin. I work as the Development Director of AIDS Network and Corey and Rico from the beginning have allowed us to do outreach and prevention at their business which is much appreciated. Next Saturday will be Fruit Fest, an enormously popular summer festival at which AIDS Network this year will be holding a fund-raising event, Summer Camp Bingo. A 5K run, Fruit Loop, is also part of Fruit Fest and benefits a scholarship for local high school students.

I first heard about the noise complaints from some of the neighbors on the neighborhood association listserv. I was taken aback by how rancorous a few of these comments were. I decided to go hear for myself and on several occasions made the 2½-block walk after midnight to check it out. The noise coming from Plan B was always negligible; certainly not enough to keep anyone awake. I did notice that more often than not it was much louder at the nearby Wisco, especially when someone would open the door. Despite the buses rumbling down my street, train whistles in the middle of the night, the lack of parking—my block has alternate side parking every day during the day between December 1 and March 15, and the crowds attracted by such goings-on as the Willy Street Fair, I wouldn't live anywhere else. I love having so many dining, entertainment and shopping options just a short walk away.

I know Rico and Corey have worked and will continue to work with the neighbors to the extent that is reasonably possible to address those that have complaints. I am concerned that some seemingly want to hold them to a different standard than that proscribed by the city's noise ordinances. I want Plan B to continue to prosper and continue to be the asset to the neighborhood and LGTB community that it is and urge you to approve their application.