City of Milwaukee

Equity Impact Statement

1. Describe the proposed ordinance or resolution. File number: _____

2023 Wisconsin Act 12 creates s. 66.0144, Wis. Stats., which prohibits advisory referendums.

2. Identify the anticipated equity impacts, if any, of this proposal.

The new law provides that no city, village, or town may conduct a referendum for advisory purposes, except for an advisory referendum regarding capital expenditures to be funded by the property tax levy of the city, village, or town. An advisory referendum offers the electorate a voice change in law or an initiative. In an advisory referendum, a legislative body such as the Common Council may place a proposed measure on the ballot to gauge the opinion of the electorate. Since an advisory referendum is not binding, the Council is not required to act in accordance with the result of the referendum. In an advisory referendum, voters make their views known on important issues without binding legislative action.

3. Identify which minority groups, if any, may be negatively or positively impacted by the proposal.

This statute will prevent the public in general and especially minority groups from expressing their views on proposals which may inform the development of policy by elected officials. Banning local referenda is against democratic principles and is likely to deprive voters, particularly underrepresented minority groups (African-American, Hispanic, Asian-American etc.), of a critical vehicle to express their views on issues that affect them.

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4. Describe any engagement efforts with minority communities potentially impacted by the proposal.

This is a new, state-mandated effort, not a City-led proposal, therefore there has been no organized engagement of minority communities to date.

5. Describe how any anticipated equity impacts of the proposal will be documented or evaluated.

Evaluating the impact of not allowing referendums is challenging, because, by its very nature, it disallows formal public input. One possible way to gauge the impact would be through public listening sessions or surveys that invite community members to express how engaged they feel with the policy-making process, rate whether or not they feel their voices are being heard, and discuss whether or not they feel their concerns and priorities are being reflected not only in policy making, but as part of the broader political discussion.

6. Describe strategies that will be used, if any, to mitigate any anticipated equity impacts.

The City could mitigate any adverse equity impacts by employing various strategies. This includes gauging public opinion on key issues and proposals through such vehicles as public opinion surveys, constituent contacts, media reporting, and, if feasible, polls. Council members could also arrange town hall meetings in their respective districts to explain the new restrictions the City is required to operate under.

Name: **Teodros W. Medhin**

Signature:

Date: **6/16/2023**