

From: Ben Hebl <1127pourmans@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 29, 2025 10:34 AM
To: Bauman, Robert <rjbauma@milwaukee.gov>
Subject: URGENT MESSAGE

Dear Alderman Bauman and our city officials,

I hope this message finds you well. I'm writing to you as a small business owner and someone who has lived downtown in the Blatz for years. I own and operate Pourman's, a neighborhood establishment that has seen the ebbs and flows of Water Street for 12 years of business. Due to heightened violence in Milwaukee in the past couple of years, the safety of our patrons and staff has become our utmost concern. It seems like an uphill battle filled with extra costs, precautions, trainings, staffing, and worry. However, I recognize this is not a unique issue amongst nightlife districts around the country. The amount of underage kids 15-20 years old coming downtown to cause mayhem is a big challenge, and as operators, I believe I speak for most, we are drawing a blank at how to protect our livelihood from these kids doing extremely dangerous and violent acts outside our establishments.

As per state law and our own internal policies, we do not allow firearms inside our premises. We work hard to maintain a safe and welcoming environment. However, our responsibility, and our legal authority, ends at our doors. We unfortunately cannot control the presence of individuals openly carrying or concealing weapons outside our bar, on the public street, or on the sidewalk.

Placing blame onto Water Street establishments for what happens in the street outside our jurisdiction causes me deep concern. My staff and I are not law enforcement. We cannot legally detain or disarm anyone outside of our property, even if they are visibly armed and causing alarm. We also cannot financially insure against liabilities or incidents that occur on the street. Yet we are increasingly expected to manage situations that are outside our legal jurisdiction and training.

Pourman's has a strict policy on our front stoop against loitering, fighting, weapons, or aggressive communication. We have a security guard placed outside our establishment on all weekend nights to attempt to maintain those standards. We also try our best to assist, communicate, and yield to police whenever necessary. We are thankful for the work they do on Water Street and beyond.

Every thriving city has multiple nightlife districts, and because a large part of tourism is socializing, bars, restaurants, and nightlife, these should be protected at all costs. Although at times people outside 2-3am can cause disturbances and even violence, the solution is not to ban and punish all bars, or continuously raise standards for them until they are forced to shut their doors. Water street, Brady Street and MLK drive should be heavily protected areas of the city because they are staples of the downtown community and tourism experience. Violence is happening all over Milwaukee, not unique to Water Street, and killing small businesses because

of the actions of certain deplorable individuals will become a fast way to destroy one of the main reasons people come to Milwaukee-nightlife. Every downtown game, concert, show, event, and convention is made better by our options of bars, restaurants, and nightlife.

I respectfully urge your office to advocate for clear policies and additional support to protect business owners from being held accountable for incidents beyond our control, and to really address the issue of armed or aggressive individuals in these designated tourist districts. If there are programs, protocols, or partnerships that we can collaborate on, I would welcome your guidance and suggestions.

I believe a meeting/discussion between the Water Street business owners, Common Council, City Attorney, and MPD would be beneficial and I believe an emergency meeting is scheduled to happen as I send this.

I have a belief in Water Street and its importance to the city and deeply hope it can return to a more friendly, peaceful district from several years ago. Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your continued service to our community.

Best Regards,
Ben Hebl

I welcome a conversation if it would help in anyway to help unify and fix our city. My cell #

[REDACTED]