

January 3, 2021

Jim Owczarski
Common Council City Clerk
City of Milwaukee

Via Email: jowcza@milwaukee.gov

Re: Letter of Support for Makda Fessahaye

Dear Mr. Owczarski and Common Council members:

It is my great pleasure and honor to recommend confirmation of Makda Fessahaye as Milwaukee's new Director of Employee Relations. Makda's background in employment law, her responsive and direct communication style, and her positive, solutions-oriented outlook will make her an excellent chief human resources officer for the city of Milwaukee.

I met Makda six years ago when she was working for the Wisconsin Department of Corrections as an Employment Relations specialist, and I as an Assistant Attorney General representing the Department and its employees in court. Makda impressed me from the start with her ability to recall minute details from her heavy caseload, dig into the case facts, spot the real legal issues affecting the Department and its employees, and suggest no-nonsense solutions that balanced the rights of all persons involved.

When Makda promoted to the Department's Office of Legal Counsel, she built upon her skills and quickly became a leader in managing employment law and public records matters that affected the department's 10,000 employees. In her time serving the Department's Office of Legal Counsel, Makda built bridges between the Department's central office, its many state-wide institutions, and the Department of Justice, so that important information flowed more freely. These bridges only strengthened after she assumed leadership of the Division of Adult Institutions.

In addition to Makda's experience handling employment relations for a large public organization, she possesses the personal skills necessary to be an effective leader. She listens to her clients' needs and considers the competing interests of the organization, its employees, and the people it serves, enabling her to reach solutions to problems that benefit all stakeholders and minimize risk to the organization. Makda is not one to be intimidated; she can gracefully manage difficult and high-profile matters.

Jim Owczarski
January 3, 2021
Page 2 of 2

Makda respects the opinions of others but can make decisive decisions. She is a workhorse with tremendous energy, but she exudes calm confidence.

I have no doubt Makda will motivate her direct reports, communicate in a timely and effective manner with city leadership, and make hard but sound decisions grounded in fairness, consistency, and common sense.

Makda will be a tremendous asset to the City of Milwaukee government.

Sincerely,

Andie Bensky

Anne (Andie) Bensky
Assistant Attorney General
Wisconsin Department of Justice