

Polanco (Urtiz), Joanna

From: Desilynn G Smith <Desilynn@ughinc.org>
Sent: Saturday, March 21, 2026 8:18 PM
To: Brower, Alex; Bauman, Robert; lamont.westmorland@milwaukee.gov; Coggs, Milele; Zamarripa, JoCasta; Taylor, Larresa; Moore, Sharlen; Burgelis, Peter; Perez, Jose; Spiker, Scott; Dimitrijevic, Marina; Stamper II, Russell
Cc: Polanco (Urtiz), Joanna
Subject: Fw: Request for Careful Consideration Regarding the Appointment of Karin Tyler as Director – Department of Community Wellness and Safety

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Good evening

Please refer to the below email in opposition of the appointment of Ms. Karin Tyler as the Director of the Department of Community Wellness and Safety.

I respectfully request that this correspondence be entered into the official record for the Public Safety and Health Committee

In Solidarity
Desilynn G Smith.

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From: Desilynn G Smith <Desilynn@ughinc.org>
Sent: Wednesday, March 11, 2026 3:18 PM
To: JPerez@milwaukee.gov <jperez@milwaukee.gov>
Cc: Larresa.Taylor@milwaukee.gov <larresa.taylor@milwaukee.gov>; Peter.Burgelis@milwaukee.gov <peter.burgelis@milwaukee.gov>; Aide2@milwaukee.gov <aide2@milwaukee.gov>; scott.spiker@milwaukee.gov <scott.spiker@milwaukee.gov>; Moore, Sharlen <sharlen.moore@milwaukee.gov>; Pratt, Andrea <andrea.pratt@milwaukee.gov>
Subject: Request for Careful Consideration Regarding the Appointment of Karin Tyler as Director – Department of Community Wellness and Safety

Good afternoon Chair and Members of the Public Safety and Health Committee,

My name is Desilynn G. Smith, and I serve as the Executive Director of Uniting Garden Homes Inc., a Milwaukee-based community organization engaged in violence prevention, behavioral health education, and community stabilization initiatives. Our organization has worked alongside community partners and City initiatives aimed at strengthening neighborhood safety, improving wellness outcomes, and supporting families impacted by violence.

I am writing to respectfully express concerns regarding the proposed appointment of Karin Tyler as Director of the Department of Community Wellness and Safety.

My intention in sharing these concerns is not personal. Rather, it is rooted in the importance of strong governance, accountability, and equitable community engagement within a department that plays a critical role in the City's violence prevention strategy.

Over the past several years, I have maintained a working relationship with the department through multiple leadership transitions and have observed the department operate under four different directors. During three of those transitions, Ms. Tyler served as Interim Director. Through those experiences, I observed recurring challenges related to communication, responsiveness to community partners, and transparency in decision-making processes.

As a community-based organization actively engaged in violence prevention and neighborhood outreach, effective collaboration with the department is essential. However, during periods of interim leadership under Ms. Tyler, my organization and others experienced significant barriers to engagement, including delayed responses to communication, limited coordination with community partners, and reduced collaboration with organizations working directly in impacted neighborhoods.

Additionally, I have personally participated in meetings where discussions occurred regarding limiting the involvement of certain community-based organizations in city-supported violence prevention efforts. The strategy appeared to focus on narrowing participation rather than strengthening partnerships across the broader ecosystem of organizations already doing this work. For a department tasked with advancing community wellness and public safety, maintaining inclusive and transparent partnerships is essential to maintaining public trust.

After raising concerns regarding these practices and expressing that I did not support behaviors that appeared divisive or exclusionary, I submitted a formal grievance outlining these issues. Following the filing of that grievance, my organization experienced an abrupt halt in referrals related to a ReCAST-funded initiative connected to the department. When I sought clarification regarding the sudden change, I was informed that statements had been made indicating that I had not followed through on assignments. I was able to provide documentation verifying that all requested deliverables had been completed. To date, we have not received any referrals.

While disagreements can occur in complex collaborative work, the sequence of events raised concerns regarding retaliatory dynamics and the potential impact such practices could have on community-based service providers attempting to work in good-faith partnership with the City.

These concerns are not limited to my experience alone. In February, two local pastors reached out directly to the department and to Ms. Tyler regarding concerns about exclusion and lack of engagement with community stakeholders. Although those pastors did receive return communication, the pattern of exclusion from collaboration and decision-making processes reportedly continued afterward. This raises broader concerns regarding the consistency and sustainability of the department's engagement with faith leaders and community organizations that serve as key partners in violence prevention and neighborhood support.

Beyond these examples, I continue to hear concerns from residents and community stakeholders regarding challenges engaging with the department. These concerns include limited communication regarding initiatives occurring within their neighborhoods, delayed responses when families seek assistance following incidents of violence, and uncertainty regarding how organizations can participate in violence prevention efforts supported by the City.

The Department of Community Wellness and Safety was established to strengthen collaboration across Milwaukee's violence prevention ecosystem. For that mission to succeed, the department's leadership must demonstrate consistent transparency, responsiveness, and a commitment to inclusive collaboration with community-based organizations that are on the front lines of this work.

As members of the Public Safety and Health Committee, the Council has an important oversight responsibility regarding the effectiveness, governance, and stewardship of public funds allocated to violence prevention and community wellness initiatives. Ensuring that leadership within this department can maintain strong,

transparent relationships with community partners is essential to achieving the outcomes that taxpayers and residents expect from these investments.

I also understand that there is currently an active investigation related to concerns regarding departmental conduct. Given the seriousness of the department's mission and its role in managing publicly funded violence prevention initiatives, it would seem prudent for the committee to ensure that any outstanding concerns, regarding Ms. Tyler and the staff she manages, are fully reviewed before confirming her to go to the next of a permanent appointment to the Director position.

Finally, I would like to share a personal perspective that underscores why this work matters deeply to me. In November, my family lost my brother to homicide in Milwaukee. Despite my longstanding involvement in violence prevention work and my organization's relationship with the department, no outreach or support was provided to my family by the department during that time. While my experience represents only one family's story, it reflects concerns I regularly hear from other families navigating similar tragedies.

The leadership of the Department of Community Wellness and Safety carries enormous responsibility. The department must not only manage programs and resources but also build trust with the communities most impacted by violence. That trust is built through transparency, accountability, and meaningful engagement with the organizations and residents working daily to address these issues.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the committee to carefully consider these concerns as part of its deliberation process and to ensure that the department's leadership is positioned to strengthen, rather than divide, the partnerships necessary to advance community safety and healing in Milwaukee.

I remain committed to working collaboratively with the City of Milwaukee and all stakeholders dedicated to improving safety and wellness across our neighborhoods. If it would be helpful, I would welcome the opportunity to provide additional perspective to the committee.

I respectfully request that this correspondence be entered into the official record for the Public Safety and Health Committee's consideration regarding the appointment of the Director of the Department of Community Wellness and Safety.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Desilynn G. Smith

"If a child can do advanced math, speak 3 languages, or receive top grades, but they cannot manage their emotions, practice conflict resolution, or handle stress, none of that other stuff is really going to matter".
(Author Unknown).

Desilynn G. Smith MS, LPC, ICS, CSAC, DOT-SAP
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State Approved SAC Training Academy
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 **Book time to meet with me**

Polanco (Urtiz), Joanna

From: Alicia Adams <mslele3@icloud.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 22, 2026 7:48 AM
To: Polanco (Urtiz), Joanna; Oatis-McMiller, Glenda; Brower, Alex; Bauman, Robert; Westmoreland, Lamont; Coggs, Milele; Jackson, DiAndre; Zamarripa, JoCasta; Taylor, Larresa; Moore, Sharlen; Burgelis, Peter; Perez, Jose; Spiker, Scott; Dimitrijevic, Marina; Stamper II, Russell
Subject: Karin Taylor

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To Whom It May Concern,

This message is written with utter dismay at the fact that Karin Tyler is being considered for the position of Director of the Department of Community Wellness and Safety!

Her communication skills are severely lacking. Her willingness to be collaborative is non-existent. She is very selective in her responses; and, gives no attention to immediate concerns within the community. She shows a lack of disregard for interacting with victims in the community, as well.

This community needs a person that is in touch with and exhibits true compassion for the community, and not just the title.

There needs to be more transparency in vetting these candidates for positions serving the community. The person considered for this position needs to be accessible for meetings and conversations affecting the community, and be responsive!

Respectfully,

A very concerned constituent

Sent from my iPhone

Polanco (Urtiz), Joanna

From: Kimble Wheeler <kimblewheeler144@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, March 21, 2026 8:21 PM
To: Brower, Alex; Polanco (Urtiz), Joanna; Stamper II, Russell; Dimitrijevic, Marina; Spiker, Scott; Perez, Jose; Burgelis, Peter; Moore, Sharlen; Taylor, Larresa; Zamarripa, JoCasta; Coggs, Milele; Westmoreland, Lamont; Bauman, Robert
Subject: Concern Citizen

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Dear Members of the Public Safety Committee,

I am writing as a concerned Milwaukee resident to raise questions regarding the potential appointment of Karin Tyler as Director of the Department of Community Wellness and Safety.

Over the past several months, I and other community members—as well as individuals connected with local organizations—have attempted to contact the department, including reaching out to Ms. Tyler directly through phone calls and emails. Unfortunately, these efforts have reportedly gone unanswered. For a department responsible for addressing community wellness and safety issues, open and consistent communication is critical. When those lines of communication are not maintained, it can make it difficult for community organizations and residents to coordinate services and effectively address neighborhood concerns.

I have also heard concerns from members of the community about Ms. Tyler's leadership approach and interactions with others. While I cannot personally verify every detail of these reports, the concerns being raised have created a level of uncertainty among residents and organizations that rely on strong cooperation with this department.

Through my own professional experience and community involvement, I have spent considerable time working with and advocating for vulnerable populations. Because of that perspective, I believe leadership within the Department of Community Wellness and Safety should reflect strong communication, accountability, transparency, and a willingness to work collaboratively with the individuals and organizations serving Milwaukee's neighborhoods.

Given the importance of this role, I respectfully ask the committee to take these concerns into consideration before moving forward with the appointment.

Sincerely,

Kimble Wheeler

Concerned Citizen