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To: planadmin <planadmin@milwaukee.gov>

Subject: Written Testimony in Opposition: 5825 W Hope Avenue - 05/18/2026 Plan Commission Hearing

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To the Milwaukee City Plan Commission:

I am submitting this written testimony in opposition to the proposed data center and self-storage facility at 5825 W. Hope Avenue, scheduled for consideration at the May 18, 2026, Plan Commission meeting.

I am a resident of Milwaukee at 4135 N. 66th Street. I am a PhD candidate in Social Welfare at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where my dissertation examines housing instability as a structural determinant of family well-being and health outcomes in Black communities. I also serve as a Health Equity Section Manager at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services and hold a Licensed Clinical Social Worker credential. I am not submitting this testimony as a general objector. I am submitting it as someone with direct research and professional expertise in the patterns reflected in this proposal.

The site at 5825 W. Hope Avenue sits in a community that is 75% Black, where 22% of residents live below the poverty line. It has been vacant since Walmart closed in 2016. The proposal before the Commission would convert a portion of this 160,000-square-foot building into a high-performance computing data center and a self-storage facility. Both uses require a deviation from the Midtown Center Development Incentive Zone Overlay standards that exist to protect this corridor from exactly this kind of proposal.

The research on this is clear. Siting low-benefit infrastructure uses in predominantly Black and low-income communities while those same communities go without adequate housing, retail access, and economic investment is a well-documented pattern of structural racism in American cities. This proposal fits that pattern. A data center generates almost no local employment, serves none of the residents who live around it, and does nothing to address the material conditions of this neighborhood.

The Commission should deny the requested zoning deviation. This site has been the subject of prior proposals that included affordable housing and mixed-use development. Those uses are consistent with the overlay standards and with what this community actually needs. Approving a deviation for a data center and storage facility sets a precedent that runs counter to the stated purpose of the Midtown Center Development Incentive Zone.

I respectfully urge the Commission to reject this proposal.

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