



Black Health Coalition of Wisconsin

3020 West Vliet Street • Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53208

Phone: (414) 933-0064 • Fax: (414) 933-0084



September 3, 2016

President Ashanti Hamilton,
Milwaukee Common Council
Chairman Robert Donovan
Public Safety Committee

RE: 2017 City of Milwaukee Budget

Dear Gentleman:

The Black Health Coalition of Wisconsin, Inc. (BHCW) has grave concerns about the increased police positions in the proposed budget without the same level of increase funding addressing the needs of the central city of Milwaukee. Residents are too often prey from those in the community who would want to take the little they have and the police department has become so hypervigilant that they do not seem to be able to distinguish between the two. I was born and raised in the central city of Milwaukee. I have been a home owner in the Sherman Park Neighborhood for the last 28 years. I could have moved to the suburbs, but this was home to me. There are wonderful families that live there. There are also individuals and families that are having a great deal of trouble. We need more than just additional police to address the issues. I have had both positive and negative experiences with the police. These experiences has been with both black and white officers. I find that the culture of the police department has not changed very much in all of this time. Even when we as a community had good jobs, we still had to be vigilant in our encounters with the police. We may not have the "Brier Sweeps" anymore, but attitudes remain the same. Now that there is no longer a residency rule, it will only get worse.

I heard someone the other day say that the purpose of the police is to "Protect and Serve", but their purpose in our community is "Law and Order". That rang so true to me because of what I have seen and experienced personally. Adding police will not change what is wrong with the department at its core. There is a separation along race and class lines that makes it difficult for such a divide to heal. While we are told by the police trust them and tell something that could get us killed, they have their "blue wall of silence" when one of their own does something wrong. Police are the only profession I can think of that uses "the need for more training" as an excuse for questionable behavior. I am a nurse, if my negligence led to someone dying, I would lose my license and probably go to jail. The issue is not training in the classroom, it is on the job culture that is the problem. This attitude has been in place against the poor and people of color and has not changed. We don't need more of that. We also need to look at how much money is used to increase jobs in city government at the expense of having more jobs in the community. There has to be more of a commitment to small black businesses and organizations and not just giving money to large agencies which usually hire less people of color. Stop telling us to wait until all the things going on downtown will trickle over to our part of town some day. We have been waiting all of our lives.

Respectfully,

Patricia McManus, PhD. RN
President/CEO