

From: LaShawndra Vernon <lvernon.esp@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 3, 2018 8:02 PM
Subject: Call for Confirmation of Dr. Kowalik for MKE Health Commissioner

Dear Milwaukee Alders,

As Milwaukee community leaders, we value a comprehensive public health approach that unites all our efforts in addressing our city's deepest inequities. Therefore, we are writing today that you confirm Dr. Jeanette Kowalik as Milwaukee Health Commissioner on September 5, 2018.

Milwaukee's health issues are deep and complex. The Milwaukee River separates black families with life expectancies 12 years shorter from their white neighbors less than a mile away. Our city is literally built of health inequities: bridges that segregate our neighborhoods, dilapidated rental housing with missing landlords, neighborhood schools that struggle to distract children from the trauma outside the window, and sidewalks lined by looming fast food and tobacco outlets. But you don't always see our crumbling public health infrastructure. Our city's design, allocation of resources, and attention matters to our health. Our civic engagement and representation matters to our health. Our city leadership matters to our health. We can improve our city's health brick by brick. And all indicators from wealth to happiness improve when our city's health improves.

With Milwaukee already on the map for health inequities, there's no reason we're in the news for mismanaging them. Systemic neglect like the city's lead poisoning prevention program, have only continued under temporary leadership with mixed messages about vaccination and a devastating scaling back of critical STI testing during a nationally significant gonorrhea and chlamydia outbreak.

Milwaukee urgently needs fresh public health leadership. Our organizations work on the front lines of poverty, violence, trafficking, housing across the city, and we know intimately the human lives that are in danger every day. It's time to put controversy aside and return MHD to being the public health leader we need to produce positive health outcomes for our city and state. MHD must be a bold and aggressive force for reversing health disparities, not a conflicted bureaucracy for neglecting them.

Dr. Jeanette Kowalik offers a fresh vision for Milwaukee health. Dr. Kowalik is committed to evidence-based practice, embraces an innovative spirit, and has a deep understanding of integration of health in all policies. She embodies our tenacity for facing our challenges, and our compassion for helping each other in tough times. She is schooled on our history of activism and not naive in her preparedness to fight systemic oppression. She understands that our vibrant neighborhoods and community leaders already hold the keys to a healthy future, and only need support and leadership to be taken to scale. She is a great pick for the future of Milwaukee, and we need her right now.

We can vouch that Dr. Kowalik will be a leader "of the people" and we're writing to put politics aside and move forward with her confirmation this week. Our city cannot wait.

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