



MILWAUKEE COUNTY CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT

ANNA MARIA HODGES
Clerk of Circuit Court/Director of Court Services

**ADMINISTRATIVE
OFFICE**

THEODORE F. CHISHOLM
Senior Administrator

SAMOTRIA MATTHEWS
Senior Administrator

DONYA SAFFOLD
Senior Financial Manager

JASON J. JONES
Executive Assistant

January 24, 2023

Dear Alderman Murphy:

I am sending this letter pursuant to your request of January 19 and your subsequent communications with personnel in the Clerk of Circuit Court's Office. We hope that this information fulfills your request. As of 1:02 p.m. on January 24, 2022, 23,176 case files are pending (i.e. filed, open, or in warrant status) in the Milwaukee County Circuit Court. These can be broken down further between felony (CF), misdemeanor (CM), and criminal traffic (CT) case files:

Felony (CF) Case Files:	9,008
Misdemeanor (CM) Case Files:	10,429
Criminal Traffic (CT) Case Files:	3,739
Total Case Files Pending:	23,176

As an administrative support agency, bound by strict statutory guidelines and assigned no decision-making power in the handling of individual cases, we are unable to comment on the substantive policy and case-specific decisions involved in backlog reduction efforts. The former are properly tasked to the principal executive and legislative organs of county government; the latter fall within the exclusive discretion of the judicial, prosecutorial, and legal entities engaged in the actual processing, scheduling, and disposition of court cases. As a result, it would not be appropriate for us to offer commentary at Thursday's committee hearing; however, we truly appreciate your engagement on this important issue, and remain available to provide additional information upon request.

Additionally, we are happy to provide a synopsis of efforts within the Clerk of Circuit Court's Office that have kept court support services fully operational throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to the present day. Examples of efforts undertaken by this office include:

- **Maintaining on-site services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.** Public-facing services (e.g. case-filing offices) have remained open throughout the pandemic, subject to appropriate hygienic precautions. Clerk of Circuit Court management personnel maintained an on-site presence to manage any day-to-day processing, file management, customer service, or courtroom operations concerns that arose. Clerk of Circuit Court operational staff worked on-



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site coordinating courtroom operations, to include staffing courtrooms that remained open (and on-site) during the pandemic.

- **Providing staff support to the reopening process.** Clerk of Circuit Court staff assisted in coordinating the court facility reopening project and restored all staff (including those working in Zoom courts) to permanent in-person status as early as possible under relevant county rules. The Clerk of Circuit Court's Office also worked quickly to reestablish in-person jury management availability based on the reopening of the courts. Additionally, the Clerk of Circuit Court's Office provides the day-to-day financial management for Milwaukee County's court system and (as the fiscal processor for the court system) has been actively involved in processing funding associated with federal and state aid to resolve the backlog.
- **Strategic recruitment and retention efforts to mitigate the impact of the Great Resignation.** The Clerk of Circuit Court's Office has worked aggressively and consistently to hire, retain, and appropriately compensate skilled employees capable of efficiently and accurately processing case files, entering data, and providing courtroom support to the judicial branch.

The work of reducing the county's case backlog is of vital importance, and the Clerk of Circuit Court's Office will continue carrying out its defined statutory duties with the efficiency, precision, and skill required to help resolve this ongoing challenge. Again, I appreciate your engagement on this important topic and look forward to working with you in the future to advance efficiency and public access within our justice system.

Sincerely,


ANNA MARIA HODGES
CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT