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November 17, 2016

Ashanti Hamilton

President

Milwaukee Common Council

200 East Wells St., Suite 205

Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear President Ashanti Hamilton:

The African American Chamber of Commerce of Wisconsin whose mission is to support the growth and sustainability of especially black –owned businesses wants to express our concern about a disparity study recently proposed by the Common Council. The Chamber appreciates the desire of the Common Council to increase the diversity of businesses contracting with the City of Milwaukee. We also salute the efforts by the Office of Small Business Development and other city departments to get our businesses involved in major construction projects underway now in the city.

The disparity study recently proposed by the Common Council could be a way to increase involvement in city contracts, but we have concerns about any such study, based on prior experience. We agree with Mayor Barrett's proposal to solicit more input on the city's contracting opportunities, both directly from our members as well as through a formal RFI, before committing to another disparity study process.

We also support the Mayor and Common Council's proposal in the budget to expand the reach of the small business capacity program, which is presently connected only to TIF-funded development projects. The Chamber recognizes the volume of work around those projects is huge, but the work our members do is not limited to construction or government contracts. Rather than anticipate the results of a study on city contracting, our members are ready to build capacity and get to work now. A number of our members have already benefitted greatly from the program.

A broader base of successful businesses in our community helps everyone, and keeps our city vibrant and growing. We welcome the city's assistance and partnership in growing local business capacity, and look forward to working with you on existing and new best practices.

Kind regards,

Dr. Eve M. Hall

President & CEO