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Finance & Personnel Committee 2026 Budget Public Input Hearing

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Good morning, Alderwoman Dimitrijevic and members of Finance & Personnel Committee. My name is Heather Dummer Combs, Take Root Milwaukee Program Director. Take Root Milwaukee is a consortium of over 60 members working collectively to promote sustainable homeownership in Milwaukee. I am here this morning to speak to you regarding the amount allocated to the Home Down Payment Assistance program in the city of Milwaukee's 2026 proposed budget.

Currently included in the proposed budget is \$600,000 for the DPA program, which is a reduction from \$1.55 million provided in 2025. We are asking that you consider increasing the funding for this important program to its current level.

The city's down payment assistance program began in 2021 and has been an instrumental piece in advancing homeownership in Milwaukee. Each year these funds have been fully disbursed to homebuyers through the HUD certified local housing counseling organizations. This program has directly helped 1,000 families purchase homes, over 95% of whom are people of color.

Without fully funding down payment assistance in the City budget, 150 families will lose the opportunity to purchase a home. Given the current housing market, now is not the time for the city to reduce their investment in this successful program.

On behalf of Take Root Milwaukee members, I respectfully ask that you to seriously consider fully funding this important program in the 2026 budget. Thank you.

ABOUT UEDA

The Urban Economic Development Association of Wisconsin (UEDA) is a 501(c)(3) membership association dedicated to facilitating effective, cross-sector collaboration, meaningful connections, and strengthening capacity in Wisconsin's community and economic development sector. Our vision is that the members and communities we serve are inspired and thriving, with equitable access to investment and opportunity. Learn more at www.uedawi.org.