

**From:** Desilynn G Smith <Desilynn@ughinc.org>

**Sent:** Saturday, March 21, 2026 8:18:23 PM

**To:** Brower, Alex <Alex.Brower@milwaukee.gov>; Bauman, Robert <rjbauma@milwaukee.gov>; lamont.westmorland@milwaukee.gov <lamont.westmorland@milwaukee.gov>; Coggs, Milele <mcoggs@milwaukee.gov>; Zamarripa, JoCasta <JoCasta@milwaukee.gov>; Taylor, Larresa <Larresa.Taylor@milwaukee.gov>; Moore, Sharlen <Sharlen.Moore@milwaukee.gov>; Burgelis, Peter <Peter.Burgelis@milwaukee.gov>; Perez, Jose <JoseG.Perez@milwaukee.gov>; Spiker, Scott <Scott.Spiker@milwaukee.gov>; Dimitrijevic, Marina <Marina@milwaukee.gov>; Stamper II, Russell <Russell.StamperII@milwaukee.gov>

**Cc:** Polanco (Urtiz), Joanna <jpolan@milwaukee.gov>

**Subject:** Fw: Request for Careful Consideration Regarding the Appointment of Karin Tyler as Director – Department of Community Wellness and Safety

Some people who received this message don't often get email from desilynn@ughinc.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

Good evening

Please refer to the below email in opposition of the appointment of Ms. Karin Tyler as the Director of the Department of Community Wellness and Safety.

I respectfully request that this correspondence be entered into the official record for the Public Safety and Health Committee

In Solidarity  
Desilynn G Smith.

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**From:** Desilynn G Smith <Desilynn@ughinc.org>

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 11, 2026 3:18 PM

**To:** JPerez@milwaukee.gov <jperez@milwaukee.gov>

**Cc:** Larresa.Taylor@milwaukee.gov <larresa.taylor@milwaukee.gov>; Peter.Burgelis@milwaukee.gov <peter.burgelis@milwaukee.gov>; Aide2@milwaukee.gov <aide2@milwaukee.gov>; scott.spiker@milwaukee.gov <scott.spiker@milwaukee.gov>; Moore, Sharlen <sharlen.moore@milwaukee.gov>; Pratt, Andrea <andrea.pratt@milwaukee.gov>

**Subject:** Request for Careful Consideration Regarding the Appointment of Karin Tyler as Director – Department of Community Wellness and Safety

Good afternoon Chair and Members of the Public Safety and Health Committee,

My name is Desilynn G. Smith, and I serve as the Executive Director of Uniting Garden Homes Inc., a Milwaukee-based community organization engaged in violence prevention, behavioral health education, and community stabilization initiatives. Our organization has worked alongside community partners and City initiatives aimed at strengthening neighborhood safety, improving wellness outcomes, and supporting families impacted by violence.

I am writing to respectfully express concerns regarding the proposed appointment of Karin Tyler as Director of the Department of Community Wellness and Safety.

My intention in sharing these concerns is not personal. Rather, it is rooted in the importance of strong governance, accountability, and equitable community engagement within a department that plays a critical role in the City's violence prevention strategy.

Over the past several years, I have maintained a working relationship with the department through multiple leadership transitions and have observed the department operate under four different directors. During three of those transitions, Ms. Tyler served as Interim Director. Through those experiences, I observed recurring challenges related to communication, responsiveness to community partners, and transparency in decision-making processes.

As a community-based organization actively engaged in violence prevention and neighborhood outreach, effective collaboration with the department is essential. However, during periods of interim leadership under Ms. Tyler, my organization and others experienced significant barriers to engagement, including delayed responses to communication, limited coordination with community partners, and reduced collaboration with organizations working directly in impacted neighborhoods.

Additionally, I have personally participated in meetings where discussions occurred regarding limiting the involvement of certain community-based organizations in city-supported violence prevention efforts. The strategy appeared to focus on narrowing participation rather than strengthening partnerships across the broader ecosystem of organizations already doing this work. For a department tasked with advancing community wellness and public safety, maintaining inclusive and transparent partnerships is essential to maintaining public trust.

After raising concerns regarding these practices and expressing that I did not support behaviors that appeared divisive or exclusionary, I submitted a formal grievance outlining these issues. Following the filing of that grievance, my organization experienced an abrupt halt in referrals related to a ReCAST-funded initiative connected to the department. When I sought clarification regarding the sudden change, I was informed that statements had been made indicating that I had not followed through on assignments. I was able to provide documentation verifying that all requested deliverables had been completed. To date, we have not received any referrals.

While disagreements can occur in complex collaborative work, the sequence of events raised concerns regarding retaliatory dynamics and the potential impact such practices could have on community-based service providers attempting to work in good-faith partnership with the City.

These concerns are not limited to my experience alone. In February, two local pastors reached out directly to the department and to Ms. Tyler regarding concerns about exclusion and lack of engagement with community stakeholders. Although those pastors did receive return communication, the pattern of exclusion from collaboration and decision-making processes reportedly continued afterward. This raises broader concerns regarding the consistency and sustainability of the department's engagement with faith leaders and community organizations that serve as key partners in violence prevention and neighborhood support.

Beyond these examples, I continue to hear concerns from residents and community stakeholders regarding challenges engaging with the department. These concerns include limited communication regarding initiatives occurring within their neighborhoods, delayed responses when families seek assistance following incidents of violence, and uncertainty regarding how organizations can participate in violence prevention efforts supported by the City.

The Department of Community Wellness and Safety was established to strengthen collaboration across Milwaukee's violence prevention ecosystem. For that mission to succeed, the department's leadership must demonstrate consistent transparency, responsiveness, and a commitment to inclusive collaboration with community-based organizations that are on the front lines of this work.

As members of the Public Safety and Health Committee, the Council has an important oversight responsibility regarding the effectiveness, governance, and stewardship of public funds allocated to violence prevention and community wellness initiatives. Ensuring that leadership within this department can maintain strong, transparent relationships with community partners is essential to achieving the outcomes that taxpayers and residents expect from these investments.

I also understand that there is currently an active investigation related to concerns regarding departmental conduct. Given the seriousness of the department's mission and its role in managing publicly funded violence prevention initiatives, it would seem prudent for the committee to ensure that any outstanding concerns, regarding Ms. Tyler and the staff she manages, are fully reviewed before confirming her to go to the next of a permanent appointment to the Director position.

Finally, I would like to share a personal perspective that underscores why this work matters deeply to me. In November, my family lost my brother to homicide in Milwaukee. Despite my longstanding involvement in violence prevention work and my organization's relationship with the department, no outreach or support was provided to my family by the department during that time. While my experience represents only one family's story, it reflects concerns I regularly hear from other families navigating similar tragedies.

The leadership of the Department of Community Wellness and Safety carries enormous responsibility. The department must not only manage programs and resources but also build trust with the communities most impacted by violence. That trust is built through transparency, accountability, and meaningful engagement with the organizations and residents working daily to address these issues.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the committee to carefully consider these concerns as part of its deliberation process and to ensure that the department's leadership is positioned to strengthen, rather than divide, the partnerships necessary to advance community safety and healing in Milwaukee.

I remain committed to working collaboratively with the City of Milwaukee and all stakeholders dedicated to improving safety and wellness across our neighborhoods. If it would be helpful, I would welcome the opportunity to provide additional perspective to the committee.

I respectfully request that this correspondence be entered into the official record for the Public Safety and Health Committee's consideration regarding the appointment of the Director of the Department of Community Wellness and Safety.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Desilynn G. Smith

"If a child can do advanced math, speak 3 languages, or receive top grades, but they cannot manage their emotions, practice conflict resolution, or handle stress, none of that other stuff is really going to matter". (Author Unknown).

**Desilynn G. Smith MS, LPC, ICS, CSAC, DOT-SAP**  
**Executive Director - Uniting Garden Homes, INC (UGH)**  
**Certified Clinical Trauma Professional**  
**State Approved SAC Training Academy**  
**State Approved Narcan Trainer**  
**Community Health Worker**  
**Certified Notary**  
**DOT SAP Provider**  
**Milwaukee County Combined Community Board- Board Chair**  
**Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force- Board Member**

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**MISSION**

**Uniting Garden Homes INC. is a neighborhood, non-profit, organization**

committed to helping individuals and their families,  
see beyond their current situation by providing support,  
mental health, substance mis-use and violence prevention education, resources,  
and advocacy, to empower and promote healing in our community.

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