



STATE SENATOR LaTonya Johnson

WISCONSIN STATE SENATE

6TH DISTRICT

City of Milwaukee Steering and Rules Committee

Testimony on File #230357: A substitute ordinance relating to a city sales and use tax

June 26, 2023

Dear Committee Members,

I would like to submit this testimony in support of File # 230357, an ordinance to establish a 2% sales and use tax applying to the sale of certain goods and services within the city of Milwaukee, and provides that tax revenues shall be used to fund public safety services and payments to the city retirement system.

First and foremost, 2023 Act 12, the state law authorizing the enactment of the 2% sales tax, is far from perfect. It contains numerous assaults on local control and diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives supported by communities across the state. These policy provisions have nothing to do with public safety or the City's pension liabilities. These provisions were mandated by Republican legislative leaders and included in this must-pass legislation in order to take advantage of the City's impending insolvency. I support any and all efforts to invalidate any unconstitutional infringements on Milwaukee's local control. I also support efforts to revise Act 12 in the future, under different legislative leadership.

In the meantime, passage of this ordinance is critical to the future of our city and everyone who calls it home. This ordinance means the difference between insolvency and the City's ability to continue providing basic services to its residents. Support for this ordinance is not an endorsement of the policy poison pills tacked on by Republican legislators—it is simply a vote to stop the City from laying off over a thousand employees, including hundreds of fire and police officers, and closing nearly its entire library system.

Voting "yes" on item 230357 is a vote to give Milwaukee the opportunity to continue building on the progress of the last decade; as well as the opportunity to grow without the crushing pension obligations and public safety expenditures that have prevented much-needed investments to improve quality of life for all city residents.

I held my nose and voted for Act 12 because that is the job we signed up for when we ran for office—sometimes doing the right thing isn't easy; sometimes it is ugly and requires accepting a quarter loaf in order to live to fight another day. Act 12 stinks, but it was my honor to cast a vote to save the city I love, and I hope all of you will feel the same sense of duty and honor when you cast your votes to do the same. Our constituents are counting on us to do the right thing, and give our City the resources it needs to ensure a brighter tomorrow.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit this testimony, and thank you to committee members for your consideration.