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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Barbara Notestein

July 15, 2008

**Testimony of Barbara Notestein, Executive Director of Safe & Sound
Community and Economic Development Committee**

The funding plan before you is flawed in two ways and needs to be amended. It cuts funding to two strategies critical to reducing crime in Milwaukee at a time when we need to do everything possible to cut crime in our city. The draft allocation plan fails to recognize that as a priority. The plan represents a missed opportunity to address crime, and the Council must take action to correct this.

The plan cuts \$25,000 from the Community Partners and cuts the funding for Youth Services by 16%.

This flies in the face of recommendations from Milwaukee's business leaders.

Recently, two organizations issued reports highlighting the crucial role that crime reduction plays in the economic well being of Milwaukee and our prospects for economic growth and development. Both make clear that crime reduction is the most important factor in our success or failure.

A May report titled, "Moving the Milwaukee Economy Forward" states: **"Unless Milwaukee is able to reduce its violent crime rate, all other economic development strategies will prove fruitless.** The economy of the city and the region demands action now before Milwaukee is labeled a dangerous city. Reducing crime is the single most important thing to do to improve the region's outlook."

In June, the Spirit of Milwaukee released the results of a survey of 1,500 business leaders from southeastern Wisconsin. They were asked to identify the things Milwaukee needs to improve. 45% picked crime, scoring it higher than taxes, education, and mass transit. Milwaukee's block grant plan must reflect those priorities.

Unfortunately, the block grant administration's plan ignores the high priority placed on crime by business leaders, and it fails to fulfill the Mayor's promise to do everything possible to reduce crime in Milwaukee.

The Block Grant administration's plan shifts money away from strategies known to successfully reduce crime.

First, it cuts the Safe & Sound Community Partners by \$25,000. Because Safe & Sound is not a large organization with significant numbers of private donors, that will translate into a staff reduction. The Community Partners are door-to-door organizers who connect residents with law enforcement and the City Department of Neighborhood Services and Public Works. According to the evaluation of Safe & Sound conducted by UWM, law enforcement personnel believe that "their relationship with the Community Partners increases safety and reduces crime in neighborhoods."

In addition, the Administration wishes to cut funding for Youth Services by more than 16%. The linkages between positive after-school programming and reductions in crime have been proven over and over across the United States. My calculation is that a cut of \$200,000 means that at least 3,300 additional youth will be unsupervised after school as a result of this cut. At a time when cutting crime and teen pregnancy are our highest priorities, do we really want to increase the number of youth who are unsupervised? We know that it is in the after-school hours that youth are most apt to commit crimes, use drugs and alcohol, and engage in sexual activity. After-school programming can not only prevent those activities, but also develop youth and engage them in leadership development and conflict resolution programming.

It falls to the Common Council to take the steps to re-prioritize the block grant package. You must re-configure the funding so that it embodies the city's highest priority. That priority must be crime reduction.

To repeat the words from the study above, "Unless Milwaukee is able to reduce its violent crime rate, all other economic development strategies will prove fruitless." To use my own words, the elected leadership of this community cannot fail to take every step possible to reduce crime.

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