

MILWAUKEE AREA LABOR COUNCIL

American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations

September 1, 2021

SERVING MILWAUKEE, OZAUKEE AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES

Dear Chairman Murphy and Members of the Finance and Personnel Committee,

633 South Hawley Road
Suite 110

The Milwaukee Area Labor Council is writing to communicate our support for the proposed Employment and Training projects totaling \$13,775,000 outlined beginning on page 9 of the plan document. Although the document is called the Mayor's plan, in terms of the items included here it really could be called the community's plan. So many ideas that have been prioritized have their genesis in the months of work put in by members of the City County Task Force on Climate Change and Economic Equity. The Task Force has documented the need to light the imaginations of the young people in our community to the types of jobs that can both offer a viable life-long career and a means to help the planet. This workforce development plan creates a critical link to the skills training needed to make a shift in Milwaukee's economic and environmental health. The investment of federal funds to help Milwaukee residents into new career pathways in green jobs will be funds well invested. If we can stress anything to policymakers, it is the very real opportunity we have with this financial support to focus on outreach, including the proposed career exploration hub in Century City. Following those engagement steps will be workforce programming to connect new people into training for a future in renewable energy and other fields that address climate change. We know that Employ Milwaukee and WRTP/Big Step have a track records of assisting people from the zip codes of highest need in the City, and we can't wait to expand this work.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53214
Phone (414) 771-7070
Fax (414) 771-0509
www.milwaukeeelabor.org

OFFICERS

Pam Fendt
President
Laborers Local 113
pam@milwaukeeelabor.org

Mark Pelzek
Vice President
AFSCME Local 47
mark@milwaukeeelabor.org

Michael Daily
Secretary
USW Local 1114
mdaily@usw.org

Ross M. Winklbauer, Sr.
Treasurer
USW Local 1343
rwinklbauer@usw.org

We are also writing in strong support of the idea to utilize ARPA funding to provide general city employees retroactive hazard pay to back to January 2020 to match up with other City employees who got hazard pay through the CARES Grant. We know that the Council has directed D.E.R. to study the feasibility of this, and we thank them for that. The resolution required the D.E.R. to submit its findings to the Common Council within 45 days. This report should be released soon, and therefore we think that considering the inclusion of such an allocation under a section in this Plan is fair recognition of the risks that many essential workers in the public sector have faced during the pandemic. ARPA was specifically designed to correct some of the flaws in the rules that precluded certain public workers from being included in hazard pay through CARES Act funding. We urge consideration of including such payments in the Continued COVID-19 Response and Adaptation section of the plan or generating stand-alone legislation to address this important equity gap.

We encourage the Council to advise the administration to consult through "meet and confer" with the AFSCME units at the City on implementation of ongoing plans for addressing the COVID situation in the workplace. We can all acknowledge that many workers do not enjoy the security of being able to perform all or most of their job over Zoom, and ARPA funds were granted to municipalities to acknowledge such work in our communities.

To that end we also support the concept of the City looking to address the situation of other essential frontline workers such as those represented by UFCW 1473, whose members work in grocery, food processing, meatpacking, and health care. We are also aware that certain hospital systems rewarded nurses with hazard or premium pay, but not other employees such as CNAs or cleaning staff, who also face dangerous conditions in hospital settings where COVID patients are treated. We believe it is problematic when private sector employers do not do all they can to recognize and reward the risks their employees take for the good of the larger community, so we further the call for government action. The council should consider creating a premium pay fund for essential workers to provide a one-time payment to workers in these front-line positions.

Sincerely,



Pam Fendt,
President



PF:rl/opeiu 9 afl-cio