



Rental Housing
Resource Center

July 23, 2021

Alderman Michael Murphy
Chairman, Finance and Personnel Committee
Common Council, City of Milwaukee

Re: Council File No. 210547, Mayor Barrett's Stronger Summer Plan

Dear Committee Chairman Murphy,

Members of the Milwaukee Rental Housing Resource Center (MKE RHRC) thank Mayor Tom Barrett for including funding for our collaborative initiative under the Mayor's Stronger Summer Plan, part of the first allocation of American Rescue Plan funding. These resources will help Milwaukee continue a strong recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in stabilizing housing, the foundation of community wellness.

In early 2021, nine co-partner organizations launched the MKE RHRC after working together in collaboration with a broader group of stakeholders over two years identifying strategies to address Milwaukee's eviction crisis. These included a tenant landlord resource center; expanded access to mediation and legal services; and more temporary rent assistance funds. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated efforts as partners worked together to meet the unprecedented needs of impacted renter households and our prior relationships made the effort more seamless.

The MKE RHRC developed a website, www.renthelpmke.org, central telephone helpline (414) 895-RENT (7368) and email (info@renthelpmke.org) to serve as a virtual clearinghouse for tenants and landlords to connect with resources, including legal and mediation services and financial assistance. MKE RHRC triage specialists now field over 500 inquiries each week from those with an urgent need for assistance with rent payment and housing problems. Co-partners are also focused on developing an eviction diversion framework that gets these resources to tenants and landlords sooner.

We are pleased to see that Mayor Barrett proposed \$1.2 million to support the Milwaukee Rental Housing Resource Center. This investment will provide critical operating support to the MKE RHRC in these early stages, providing a strong foundation that will ensure sustainability as co-partners meet increased demand for services. The MKE RHRC leverages expertise from many facets of the rental housing system, bringing them together under one roof to align resources and capacity while avoiding duplication of effort and resources.

Over the past few months, members of the MKE RHRC have been active in local and national groups focused on eviction diversion and prevention. For example, the City of Milwaukee is participating in the National League of Cities Eviction Learning Lab cohort, and on July 21, Deb Heffner, Housing Strategy Director and MKE RHRC Coordinator, presented information on our effort to a national audience of 2,000 participants at a White House-sponsored eviction prevention webinar. The City of Milwaukee got some great, favorable attention and our unprecedented collaboration serves as an example that organizations that appear to have disparate interests can find common ground to serve the community.

MKE RHRC co-partners every day see the economic disparities present in the housing system – disparities which have resulted from a legacy of past discrimination and racist practices such as redlining and unequal access to jobs and educational opportunities. The plan includes an intentional focus on racial equity and inclusion that is an important first step to address the unequal impact of COVID-19 on Milwaukee residents. We strongly support using ARPA funds for initiatives that increase housing stability, and expand and enhance safe, affordable housing – leading toward a more resilient and healthier city.

Sincerely,
Milwaukee Rental Housing Resource Center Co-Partners

Apartment Association of Southeastern Wisconsin
Community Advocates
Hope House
IMPACT Inc.
Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee
Mediate Wisconsin
City of Milwaukee Department of Neighborhood Services
Milwaukee County Division of Housing

The Urban Economic Development Association of Wisconsin, Inc. (UEDA) serves as the MKE RHRC convener.

cc: Members of the Finance and Personnel Committee, City of Milwaukee Common Council
Alderman Milele Coggs, District 6
Alderman Nik Kovac, District 3
Alderman Scott Spiker, District 13
Alderman JoCasta Zamarripa, District 8

Mayor Tom Barrett, City of Milwaukee
President Cavalier Johnson, City of Milwaukee Common Council



Social Development Commission
Pathways from poverty to success

July 28, 2021

Alderman Michael Murphy
Chairman, Finance and Personnel Committee
Common Council, City of Milwaukee

Dear Committee Chairman Murphy,

Community Relations-Social Development Commission is in support of Mayor's Stronger Summer Plan, part of the first allocation of American Rescue Plan funding. The Stronger Summer Plan provides over \$93 million in much needed funding for a range of critical programs as a first phase of investment, and these resources will help Milwaukee continue a strong recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the City of Milwaukee's designated Community Action Agency, SDC is committed to support projects that benefit communities and economic development for the families who live here. The Mayor's Recovery & Resilience Plan centers racial equity and inclusion in each recommended investment, taking intentional first steps to address the unequal impact of COVID-19 on Milwaukee residents. It also provides significant resources to several key areas:

- Affordable and sustainable housing development, operations, and support programs. For example, the Take Root Milwaukee program works closely with the Department of City Development to connect people to services and resources that help them "Buy, Fix or Keep" their home. We fully support the allocation for HUD-approved homeownership counseling programs – these agencies are critical partners in our efforts to sustain and increase homeownership rates in the city. Both the Compliance Loan and Climate, Energy, & Equity Upgrade programs address the need for critical resources that help maintain and improve the city's older housing stock.
- Milwaukee Rental Housing Resource Center (RHRC), a new collaborative initiative to serve as a virtual clearinghouse for tenants and landlords to connect with resources such as legal and mediation services and financial assistance.
- Small business support including Business Restart 3.0 and the Ethnic & Diverse Business Coalition (EDBC), both of which will provide direct investment to programs that will help Milwaukee businesses sustain operations and access technical assistance resources.
- Employment and job training programs that will connect city residents in high poverty and/or groups that are experiencing higher rates of unemployment to paid training, apprenticeships, workforce transition, and certification opportunities.

We strongly support using ARPA funds for initiatives that increase housing stability, invest in neighborhoods, support our small business community, and enhance economic opportunity for Milwaukee residents – leading toward a more resilient and healthier city. Your support of the Stronger Summer plan will help Milwaukee emerge from this pandemic stronger and more equitable.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George P. Hinton", written over a circular stamp or seal.

George P. Hinton, BA, MHA, PhD
CEO