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**MILWAUKEE COUNTY PASSES ORDINANCE TO ADVANCE RACIAL EQUITY AND
IMPROVE HEALTH OUTCOMES**

*Milwaukee County leaders commit to eliminating institutional racism by addressing
County policies, practices and power structures through a racial equity lens*

Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele today with Milwaukee County Board Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson, County Executive-elect David Crowley and Director, Nicole Brookshire with the Office on African American Affairs (OAAA) announced the signing of an ordinance that commits Milwaukee County to advancing racial equity and eliminating health disparities. The ordinance, unanimously passed by the County Board, moves forward Milwaukee County's vision that by achieving racial equity, Milwaukee is the healthiest county in Wisconsin.

"For hundreds of years, government institutions have been connected to the atrocities against those with a historical lineage to slavery. Now because we know better, we must do better. Passing this ordinance is one way we can address the policies and practices that have contributed to racial inequities in our communities," said County Executive Abele.

The ordinance commits Milwaukee County government to identify and address policies, practices and power structures that, whether intentionally or unintentionally, work in favor of white people and create barriers for black, brown, and indigenous people. The ordinance ensures racial equity is a top priority of Milwaukee County government and remains larger than any one government leader. Officials signed the ordinance one year after Milwaukee County passed a first-of-its kind resolution declaring racism a public health crisis in May 2019.

“Milwaukee County is on the right side of history. As Chairwoman, I will continue to ensure our policy decisions at Milwaukee County are made with an eye toward racial equity. Our departments will begin to submit budgets using a racial equity budget tool. The Racial Equity Budget Tool is a structured racial equity lens for departments to critically assess the impacts of budget decisions on communities of color. It’s an opportunity to constantly ask ourselves, who benefits and who burdens from the decisions we make,” said County Board Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson.

Milwaukee County will initially focus on five areas to transform the services it provides and create a system that works for all residents. Milwaukee County will:

- Build a more diverse and inclusive workforce in which employees reflect the diversity of the community at all levels and where differences are welcomed and valued.
- Ensure a diverse array of Milwaukee County employees at all levels are involved in designing equitable programs and services that meet the needs of the community.
- Design Milwaukee County services to meet residents’ needs, rather than asking residents to fit their needs into existing Milwaukee County services.
- Track and analyze data to better understand the impact of County services and find solutions accordingly.
- Generate new sources of revenue and implement additional efficiencies to address the structural deficit and make needed investments that advance racial equity.

“The Office on African American Affairs will continue to assist all Milwaukee County leaders as well as those across our state to institutionalize racial equity,” said Nicole M. Brookshire, Executive Director of Milwaukee County’s Office on African American Affairs. “This ordinance elevates public participation, which will ensure community members’ voices are represented as we advance racial equity throughout the County, especially during these uncertain times.”

There are significant health disparities for Milwaukee County residents along racial lines, which impacts community health overall. The 2020 County Health Rankings show Milwaukee County is ranked 71 out of 72 counties for health in the state of Wisconsin. According to 2019 data from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), a white person in Milwaukee County lives, on average, nearly 14 years longer than a black person. DHS data also shows the infant mortality rate is nearly three times higher for black infants than white infants, at 14.2 and 4.8 deaths per 1,000 births, respectively.

The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated racial disparities, with African Americans comprising 52 percent of COVID-19-related deaths while making up only 26 percent of the County population.

“As I step into the role of County Executive, I bring my experience as a black man who grew up in poverty in this community. This work is personal. Racial equity will not only guide our response and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, but it will inform the way Milwaukee County does business moving forward,” said County Executive-elect David Crowley.

County Executive-elect Crowley begins his term on May 4, 2020. The ordinance was introduced by Milwaukee County Supervisors Marcelia Nicholson, Felesia A. Martin, Jason Haas, Supreme Moore Omokunde, Willie Johnson, Jr. and Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele.

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