



Ashanti Hamilton
City of Milwaukee Common Council

The challenges and opportunities of the 2020 city budget

**Statement of Common Council President Ashanti Hamilton
September 30, 2019**

Every year, the budget process gives us the opportunity to face our challenges and discover new opportunities to meet those challenges. This year is no different. Currently our fiscal difficulties loom large, and in the midst of so many varied opinions and viewpoints; I want to make my position clear. I fully support the City being able to diversify its revenue streams through new means such as increased shared revenue or a local sales tax. However, I have to express my frustration with the way this conversation is continually being framed. I am tired of Milwaukee being positioned as the beggar, waiting for the State to save us. We absolutely should have the right to raise additional revenue, but we cannot wait for the State in the fight for better outcomes for our residents.

Milwaukee, the largest City in the State, seems to carry a reputation with the rest of the state as being a “burden” when in fact we generate a large portion of the state’s revenue and possess the greatest opportunity for the State to realize more growth and economic success. In 2015, Milwaukee alone provided \$1.377 billion in State Revenue, and only received \$227 million of shared revenue in return. That means we get back a paltry 16% of our contribution. We are home to nearly 1/5 of all jobs statewide and right now we are producing the most growth and development for the state of Wisconsin.

If the State wants fiscal success and improved outcomes for Wisconsin as a whole, it is in their best interest to invest in the City. However, if the State will not rethink its investment in Milwaukee, we must advocate for the authority to reap the benefits of our growth.

-More-

The idea of investing in Milwaukee is nothing new and has proven to be fruitful in a number of recent cases. The State bought into the idea of a vibrant Milwaukee with the Wisconsin Center District. They recognized that this asset could benefit the region and all of Wisconsin, a similar viewpoint that they had when they invested in the Fiserv Forum. The latter investment has generated unbelievable development in the surrounding area and contributed heavily to Wisconsin being selected as the first Midwestern host of the DNC in decades. As they have in the past, State officials should again embrace the opportunity to bring more resources to the population of a City that gives so much to the State.

In this City and County, our mission is to maintain and build upon a local level of services that Milwaukee can be proud of. Providing high quality services in our current financial situation is not easy, but we cannot afford to wait. We must improve the situations around public safety, infrastructure, and neighborhood reinvestment. These issues cannot wait for State support. I do not deny that challenges loom, but continuing to bring a coalition of voices to the table to help craft solutions will empower all Milwaukeeans to control our own destiny. That is my focus for this budget process. I hope that our State will join me in supporting our people.

-30-

