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CAVALIER JOHNSON
COMMON COUNCIL PRESIDENT
ALDERMAN, 2ND DISTRICT

Work to improve equity for communities of color starts from within

Statement of Common Council President Cavalier Johnson June 22, 2020

Last week we celebrated Juneteenth Day and I again would like to recognize the accomplishments, strengths, and vibrancy of Milwaukee's African American community. I also acknowledge that our city and our nation must recognize, correct, and heal from centuries of systemic violence and oppression.

Across our community and our country, residents continue to demand a new way forward. We can no longer support a status quo which has created and reinforced the lack of educational opportunities and employment, heightened incarceration, and economical gaps that exist between Milwaukee's Black and White residents which are unequal and unjust.

As an elected official, I took an oath to serve my community. It is my role to ensure that the current advocacy and movement in response to George Floyd's murder leads to lasting institutional change. Even though Juneteenth Day marks a celebration of the emancipation of enslaved African's in the United States, it also stands as a reminder of the continuation of racist systems of oppression the still continue today.

Last week Tuesday, the City of Milwaukee Common Council voted unanimously to send appointed department heads back to committees for further discussion around their commitment to anti-racist practices in their organizational policies and practices. In order to enact racial equity externally in our neighborhoods, it is critical that leadership within the City commits to that same standard of work inside of our organization as well. This commitment to equity is crucial to move from a place of simply reacting to inequality, toward activity dismantling institutions that were created to reinforce and replicate racial oppression in our community. This is not simply a statement of recognition, but a commitment to operationalize anti-racist practices within the City of Milwaukee as a governmental entity.

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As department head nominees come before City of Milwaukee committees, I ask they address the following components of furthering antiracism under their leadership:

Equity and Inclusion

- A statement documenting departmental commitment to advancing and achieving racial equity, including:
 - Roles and responsibilities at all levels of the department
 - Processes used to collect data and measure success
 - A commitment to engaging key community stakeholders and using their feedback to set departmental priorities and goals

- An open-ended discussion relative to how you will use your leadership role in city government to uplift, empower, and protect black and brown lives

Workforce Demographics

- Current workforce and annual reports on new hires, promotions, and separations
- Departmental efforts to increase staff diversity and recruitment and retention efforts
- Departmental efforts to advance diversity in managerial and leadership roles
- Departmental efforts related to orientation and onboarding with a focus on racial equity and inclusion
- Managerial efforts and practices that support and expect work environments that are equitable, inclusive, and fair

Accountability

- Departmental framework for establishing policy and decision making through an equity lens
- Initiatives and strategies to provide culturally responsive service delivery
- Departmental metrics to track disparate racial impact in resident service utilization and allocation of resources
- Assessment of administrative requirements related to policies, programs, practices, fees, applications, hours of operation, licenses or fees that represent barriers to achieving equity and inclusion and plans for eliminating the aforementioned barriers
- Strategies and opportunities for engaging community stakeholders on a regular basis and for allowing on-going and continuous community feedback
- Efforts to incorporate equity goals in budget preparation and allocation

In addition to this framework for department head nominees, I will also be introducing legislation seeking to accomplish the following:

1. Direct the Department of Employee Relations to establish guiding principles to be used by all City departments in advancing and achieving racial equity now and in the future

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2. Require the development of annual racial equity work plans outlining each department's actions and results in addressing systemic racism in departmental services, resource allocation, and internal staffing operations and leadership
3. Direct the Department of Employee Relations to implement mandatory implicit bias, unlearning racism, and anti-racism training for all employees, including those in leadership positions
4. Direct all city departments to research and require the creation of partnerships with community resource hubs and neighborhood institutions to increase accessibility to city information and services

We must dismantle the institutions which have reproduced racism and oppression in our community and rebuild them through transformative organizational leadership at the City of Milwaukee. I look forward to engaging with each of the Mayor's department head nominees to further discuss their commitment to their role in this process.

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