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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Cavalier Johnson  
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## Recent reports highlight delicate position of libraries due to funding constraints

In a recent article published by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, two Wisconsin Policy Forum reports were detailed regarding the delicate position of our area library systems. The report “By the Book” shows how libraries have adapted to the digital age in recent years. The report shows that while some traditional library usage trends have fallen, others including use of public Wi-Fi, electronic materials, and attendance at various programs are on the rise. These services play a particularly important role for those who are low income, live in rural areas and are people of color.

“By the Book” also forewarns some financial and staffing challenges may become more onerous in the future. This item is explored in more depth in a second report released earlier this month titled “Balancing the Books.” The full report, which can be found [here](#), shares the findings and recommendations of a financial sustainability task force that was created by the Milwaukee Public Library’s (MPL) Board of Trustees. The report notes that MPL relies heavily on City funds to support operations, and that funding only grew by 3.1% from 2011-2019, which when adjusted for inflation equates to a 10% decrease and has led to a reduction in staff and services. Should this trend continue, funding for MPL will become more restricted in the years to come.

**Common Council President Cavalier Johnson** hopes the findings of these reports don’t fall on deaf ears. “The dual reports published by the Wisconsin Policy Forum this year outline the grim reality that our libraries will be facing in the future. This is particularly troubling as libraries continue to serve as community hubs and support residents in new and innovative ways,” said President Johnson. “I want to thank the Wisconsin Policy Forum and Milwaukee Journal Sentinel for shining a light on this very important issue.”

**-More-**

## **Library Reports/ADD ONE**

“I have said this before and I will say it again, our State funding system is broken. Legislators in Madison must either increase shared revenue coming to Milwaukee, the state’s economic engine, or provide the authority to raise additional revenues,” President Johnson continued. “No municipality should have to be in a position where they must grapple with the idea of cutting services like those our libraries provide, which is exactly where Milwaukee could find itself in the coming years without change. While these obstacles can only be remedied by State action, I will continue to advocate for these structural barriers to be torn down.”

Additional recommendations detailed in “Balancing the Books” include changing MPL’s governance and structure, pursuing new partnerships and earned revenue possibilities, and carving out a larger role for the MPL Foundation to provide effective short-term relief.

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