



CITY OF MILWAUKEE

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Broader conversation on public safety needed now

Joint Statement of Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs and Alderwoman Marina Dimitrijevic

Yesterday, after months of community conversation the majority of the Milwaukee Common Council voted to break with the institutional tradition of expanding the police department budget with federal funding from the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Grant. While this topic is ongoing, it represents a change in the conversation our city needs.

After pursuit of changes to improve public safety for all with requests of major policing reform in the police department were met with resistance, the Council chose to continue its work to address the current police structure in Milwaukee. With a new Executive Director of the Fire and Police Commission receiving unanimous support and a new Police Chief set to begin work in 2021, now is the time to collectively, along with the community, reimagine what policing and public safety look like in our city and create an environment where everyone feels safe and peace is increased.

As mothers, we want our young children, and all children of Milwaukee, to feel safe, be safe and have positive experiences with calls for service and law enforcement. We can and must do better.

Systemic change is never easy. It takes forethought, intentionality, empathy and understanding. To broaden the conversation we must be aware of what our end goal is in terms of public safety before we can take the needed steps to get there. Namely we must consider – What do we want public safety to look like long term? What should the role of police officers be within the community? What is it that will make people feel safe and secure in their neighborhoods?

These discussions may be difficult, take time and require different, outside the box thinking, but are necessary to push Milwaukee forward. Let's start moving in that direction together.