



CITY OF MILWAUKEE

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

November 6, 2020

# **A budget that simply doesn't go far enough**

**Statement from Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs, Alderman Ashanti Hamilton,  
Alderwoman Nikiya Dodd, Alderman Khalif J. Rainey, Alderman Russell W.  
Stamper, II and Alderwoman Chantia Lewis**

We are living in unprecedented times, and at a moment when the community's engagement in the political system is at an all-time high. As we have undertaken the extremely difficult task of attempting to influence the City of Milwaukee's budget for 2021, we have been reminded by many that a budget is a moral document. With that in mind, today we chose to cast our votes against the 2021 City budget.

As we continue to face the financial constraints of stagnant shared revenue, limitations on taxing abilities, revenues plummeted due to COVID-19 and a looming, massive pension payment, we know that future budgets will be even more challenging. We have witnessed a continued diminishing impact of our amendments and footnotes on the Mayor's budget. As we reflect on our responsibility to those we serve for the stewardship over their tax dollars we recognize that there simply must be a change in budget process, priorities, and participation.

The Council and community receive the Mayor's proposed budget in late September, offering just a couple of weeks to dissect, hear from the public, and then negotiate with colleagues and ultimately craft amendments. We believe that if the administration would put greater effort into listening to community members before the budget is drafted, perhaps we would not need to offer so many major amendments, because those concerns would already be included in the document!

We believe strongly that more time is necessary to allow for well thought out amendments and comprehensive dialogue and input from the community. No one department should consume the lion's share of the budget, and the community's spending priorities should be factored in.

For example, we know that we must consider the community's needs and priorities when looking at the massive budget for the Milwaukee Police Department, which has for decades brought racially centered control and daily oppression in the neighborhoods we represent. We know we would be doing our community a disservice by not using the budget to address the social, economic, public safety, public health and education issues that are at the forefront of our minds. But the budget process simply does not work for us in its current form when it comes to these critical issues!

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We acknowledge the revolution in values the community is fighting for us to see and we will NOT continue to support budgets that are balanced on the back of our community and leave residents feeling like they are paying more and receiving less in service.

We stand ready and willing to work toward meaningful changes to aid in the creation of future budgets of which we can all be proud, and we are ready to start the conversation.