



CITY OF MILWAUKEE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lamar refuses billboard ads with Black Lives Matter content

Statement from members of the Milwaukee Common Council – Alderman Khalif J. Rainey, Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs, Alderwoman Chantia Lewis, Alderman Russell W. Stamper, II, Alderman Cavalier Johnson, Alderwoman Nikiya Dodd, Alderman Ashanti Hamilton, Alderman Nik Kovac and Alderman José G. Pérez

With Milwaukee playing a prominent role in peaceful protests featuring people from all backgrounds and races, calling for justice for George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, as well as for dozens of other Black and brown people who have been killed by police officers, it is highly disturbing to learn that a local billboard advertiser has rejected socially important ads relevant to the Black Lives Matter movement.

This reported censorship by Lamar Advertising would be disturbing at any time, but especially during a deadly pandemic and a national and global reckoning on systemic racism, social justice and inequality, as well as a push for long overdue police reform to address officer misconduct, targeting, and killing of Black and brown people in police custody and during calls for service.

Reporting indicates that Lamar recently rejected Milwaukee ads from rap artist Jay-Z and his Team ROC, a division of the artist's Roc Nation company, addressing police misconduct (and in particular suspended Wauwatosa police officer Joseph Mensah, who has shot and killed three persons of color in the line of duty in recent years) and against police actions/tactics that have resulted in the deaths of people in police custody or who have been stopped by police.

At this important time, we are asking for an explanation of any policies in place at Lamar to vet which ads are OK and which ones are not. What is the standard in the industry for ads that are deemed too 'controversial' to be displayed? Are all of the ads being examined equally, fairly, and with the same criteria, and are they being reviewed free of unconscious bias?

We ask that Lamar kindly do some significant internal review of their ad policies, so potentially socially important billboard messages are not censored because they are deemed 'too controversial' or potentially offensive to 'certain segments of society.'