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MICHAEL J. MURPHY
ALDERMAN, 10TH DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 10, 2020

Ald. Michael J. Murphy
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Council approves \$100K for helping indigent defendants

On Tuesday (July 7) the full Common Council voted unanimously in agreeing to spend \$100,000 to fund an attorney to represent indigent defendants with cases before the Municipal Court.

The funding will come from the city's federal Community Development Block Grant allocation, and the attorney will be provided through a contract with Legal Action of Wisconsin.

Alderman Michael J. Murphy, who sponsored the successful amendment in the 2017 city budget to create a pilot program to provide funding for legal representation for Municipal Court defendants, said he was pleased that his colleagues helped approve the funding after the pilot program ended.

"This program has been exceptional in helping indigent defendants who would otherwise be stymied in their ability to work their cases to a more positive outcome, because of poverty, unpaid citations, or driver's license issues," Alderman Murphy said.

"The Municipal Court legal defense assistance could help keep indigent residents out of jail," said Alderman Murphy, chair of the Finance and Personnel Committee.

As reported by *Urban Milwaukee*, the UW-Milwaukee Employment & Training Institute found that from 2008-2013, there were 9,277 defendants who saw jail time for failing to pay their municipal citations, and 78% were African American, 84% men, and almost half from the city's five poorest ZIP codes. The study found the average person incarcerated had spent an average of 8 days in jail, for a total of 98,824 days spent in jail by the population studied.

"This is a time of calls for change and for examining our justice system to see where things are out of balance and where inequities are unfairly impacting our citizens," Alderman Murphy said.

"I am pleased that the Council took some funding and placed it in a program that can help level the playing field for some of these defendants, most of whom have been fighting against a stacked deck for years," he said.

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