



CITY OF MILWAUKEE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 3, 2021

## **Bold efforts being offered to help boost Milwaukee's COVID recovery**

**Statement from Common Council members: Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs, Alderwoman Nikiya Dodd, Alderman Khalif J. Rainey, Alderwoman Chantia Lewis, Alderman José G. Pérez and Alderman Russell W. Stamper, II**

For more than a year, our city - along with the rest of the nation - has struggled through a deadly and costly pandemic. The impact of COVID-19 on Milwaukee residents and families has been devastating. In a move to help us, the federal government has made possible through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) \$394 million for the City of Milwaukee, half of which has already been received (the other half will be received next year).

We support Common Council resolution # 210233 – legislation directing the Department of Administration Budget and Management Division to divide an equivalent percentage of ARPA funds among aldermanic districts for distribution based on the principles of participatory budgeting, with the intention to afford an opportunity for residents to determine how a portion of this once-in-a-generation money will be directly allocated. Under the proposed legislation, no less than \$1 million would be allocated to each aldermanic district.

The Common Council in 2019 passed, in the budget, the creation of a participatory budgeting system. The Department of Administration, working with members of the community and the Council, worked to create educational and survey tools to be used for participatory budgeting, and in an historic move, those tools were used for the first time last year. Thousands of residents engaged in the process, which had no specific funds attached.

Now with the ARPA funds, we see a real opportunity for us to not only hear the priorities of residents, but to put resources behind some of the very things they want. We as a Council have clearly committed to engaging the public and looking through a lens of equity and inclusion for these dollars. We cannot think of a better way to demonstrate our commitment to those principles than to support the allocation of no less than \$1 million per aldermanic district – to be spent in a manner determined solely by district residents utilizing a participatory budgeting process.

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Aldermanic districts across the city of Milwaukee face varying challenges, and this process would allow each to begin to address their specific needs. It would also empower residents to make decisions regarding how to best meet the needs of their neighborhoods and community within the federal guidelines of usage of the ARPA funds.

It should be noted that any district-specific ARPA funding that comes forward will in no way restrict the ability of residents to benefit from programming and/or improvements that will be brought forth by the city's overall (huge) ARPA funding infusion.

We must ensure that the ARPA dollars (public funds) bring the long term impact we desire in helping this city and its residents. In this critical moment we recognize the need for this funding to help residents not just survive through the pandemic, but be put in a position to thrive after it.

We sincerely hope the community embraces this participatory budgeting process and the empowerment that it can bring.