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MILELE A. COGGS
ALDERWOMAN, 6TH DISTRICT

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- Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation Board
- Special Joint Committee on the Redevelopment of Abandoned and Foreclosed Homes
- Steering and Rules Committee
- Wisconsin Center District Board

Despite difficult budget decisions ahead we must ensure our libraries remain strong

Statement of Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs September 20, 2022

As Mayor Johnson released his proposed 2023 executive budget today and spoke to the financial challenges that lie ahead for the City of Milwaukee, attention has to be paid to the cuts that are being recommended. One department impacted by those proposed cuts is the Milwaukee Public Library.

In reflecting on the role that libraries play within the community I instantly thought of Harambee, the neighborhood in which I was raised. Harambee is Swahili for “let’s pull together,” a phrase that perfectly captures the cohesive role our libraries play. They bring immense value in the form of supportive services to a community including providing programs that help improve the literacy rate of young people, computer access for job seekers, providing community gathering spaces, or by offering a safe space for young people, among others.

I applaud the library’s leadership in working diligently to build new branches, including plans for the forthcoming King Library development, in addition to exploring efficiencies and considering new service models, but given all the negatives we see and experience in Milwaukee it is imperative that we invest in our libraries now more than ever.

As a child one of the safe spaces I relied on was the neighborhood library. My love of literature was sparked and fed at Martin Luther King Library, so much so that I went on to Fisk University to obtain a bachelor’s degree in English. As a teenager, I spent time tutoring and mentoring young people at the library to help them enhance their reading skills as a way to give back and support the place that supported me.

As an adult I am honored to have the opportunity to now serve on the library board and witness the transformation of the library system in Milwaukee as the needs of residents and service delivery models continue to evolve.

The Mayor’s 2023 proposed budget calls for the closure of Martin Luther King Library and a reduction in services at other locations while increasing library community outreach in various ways.

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In the coming weeks there will be opportunities for the public to share their thoughts on budget priorities for the city, and I encourage residents to seize these opportunities and to let the Mayor and Aldermen know that they support our libraries.

The first chance to provide input is the Joint Public Hearing on the Mayor's proposed 2023 budget. This meeting will take place on Monday, October 3 at 6:30 p.m. in the Common Council Chamber at City Hall, 200 E. Wells St. This hearing is in-person only.

Additionally, The Council's Finance and Personnel Committee will host a public input meeting on Friday, October 14 at 9 a.m. in room 301-B on the third floor of City Hall, 200 E. Wells St. This event will be held in-person but those wishing to provide input virtually may do so by registering in advance [here](#).

In addition to these public meeting opportunities, residents can also call or email their elected officials to share their thoughts.

Even with the difficult financial situation our city faces, the closure of any library or a reduction in library services is a step in the wrong direction for our city. I am committed to fighting for the restoration of the library cuts and keeping the Martin Luther King Library open. Our city deserves nothing less than a thriving library system.

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