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Date: February 3, 2016

To: County Executive Chris Abele and
Chairman Theodore Lipscomb, Sr., Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Chief Judge Maxine Aldridge White

Subject: Chief Judge, Wisconsin First Judicial District Request for Dispositional Alternatives for Juveniles
in Milwaukee County Courts

As a result of the Federal and State probe into allegations of abuse, neglect, sexual assault, and excessive use of force at the Lincoln Hills School (LHS) and Copper Lake School (CLS) juvenile correctional institutions, the Chief Judge in Milwaukee County is asking the members of the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors to take immediate action to address the issues facing our Milwaukee County youth.

Milwaukee County youth who are sent to LHS and CLS are not receiving the appropriate care and services that they require to live responsible and productive lives when they return to our community. The current Department of Correction (DOC) facilities have proven ineffective in a myriad of ways. In particular, the Division of Juvenile Corrections 2014 Annual Report documents a three-year recidivism rate of 63.84% for our male population. The youth we are sending to DOC today have many needs. Many have major mental health issues. Sadly, the majorities have been exposed to and have participated in violence in our community. We now know that their resulting trauma has far-reaching ramifications. Confinement with limited programming and services will only perpetuate the continued victimization of our youth and our community. We need to address this crisis as these youth will be released and living back among us.

Today we have approximately 170 Milwaukee County youth in LHS and CLS. I am requesting the following:

1. The Department of Human Services—Delinquency and Court Services Division (DCSD) should immediately create teams of human service workers (HSW) and Wraparound trained professionals with clinical oversight to provide an assessment of each youth located in LHS or CLS. The assessment should look at the juvenile's mental health needs; assess the juvenile's programming needs, and the juvenile's current threat to public safety. The team should also be charged with evaluating each youth for alternative placement and programming options within Milwaukee County or surrounding areas. This information can be used by DCSD and the legal parties to file any appropriate motions with the court. Parties will be encouraged to jointly participate in a multidisciplinary staffing prior to the court hearing.

2. Today, the Milwaukee County Children's Court judiciary has limited alternatives to DOC for our high risk youth when confinement is required. One of the most significant reform efforts has included the Milwaukee County Accountability Program (MCAP). This is evidence based, person centered, recovery focused, and trauma informed model to keep juveniles from re-offending. MCAP is designed to allow these juveniles to be placed in the Milwaukee County Juvenile Detention Facility (MCJDF) instead of being sent to LHS. Once released from the MCJDF, these juveniles then receive a period of aftercare in the community under DCSD supervision with family engagement.

Milwaukee County has recently added an additional 12 beds to the MCAP in MCJDF bringing our total to 24. In order to maintain the appropriate levels of supervision and program efficacy in the current MCAP program, I am requesting the creation of eight Juvenile Correctional Officer positions. Four of these positions were eliminated in the 2016 budget based on the plan to move MCAP to the former CATC facility.

In addition, I am requesting the expansion of MCAP by an additional 44 beds located at the former CATC facility for a total of 68 beds. Notably, there are no comparable programs for our female juveniles. Accordingly, I am requesting a female specific MCAP program.

3. In July 2012, the County Board authorized the implementation of a short-term secure placement program within the MCJDF as a dispositional placement option. At the time the resolution was adopted, the statute limited the length of placement to no more than 180 days. Since the passage of the resolution the law has changed to allow the length of placement to be 365 days. I am requesting the County Board to acknowledge the change in the statute that allows for a 365-day placement in a secure detention facility post disposition. In order to expand our MCAP program, the County Board must authorize the creation of additional public detention facilities outside of the Vel R. Phillips Juvenile Justice Center pursuant to Wisconsin State Statute section 938.22(1)(a) and (c) in accordance with WIS. ADMIN. DOC SEC. 646.04.

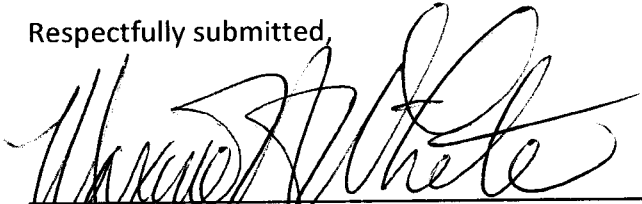
4. The DCSD must expand an aftercare unit. Ideally, this unit should consist of seven HSWs and one aftercare manager. This requires the County Board to authorize the creation of three HSWs and one aftercare manager. Three HSW positions were already approved by this Board and included in the 2016 budget. In addition, DCSD currently has one HSW assigned to 30 youth at DOC. The aftercare unit will allow DCSD to provide oversight of DOC services and advocacy while the juvenile is confined. This unit will also work to create a comprehensive transition plan when prior to and after the youth is released from the institution.

5. There are certain delinquent acts that can designate our juveniles as serious juvenile offenders (SJO). With these juveniles, by statute, Judges must find that a one to two year DOC commitment is insufficient. SJO is a five-year commitment that extends the court's jurisdiction beyond the juvenile's eighteenth birthday. These juveniles are treated differently. Because of the severity of the underlying offense they can be confined for up to three years with an additional two years of mandatory aftercare in the community. In order for us to provide an alternative placement for these juveniles, I am requesting the County Board to direct the Superintendent of the House of Corrections to study the feasibility and cost associated with using the HOC as a dispositional placement for SJO.

6. I am requesting the County Board to direct DCSD to work with the Department of Child and Families to create secure and non-secure Residential Care Centers for Children and Youth (RCCCY) for our Milwaukee County youth. Prior to the crisis at LHS and CLS, judges have had concerns over the RCCCYs lack of willingness to accept our youth in their facilities. We need to look at partnering with community agencies to develop RCCCYs that can meet the needs of youth and their families.

While I am fully aware that my requests on behalf of the Judiciary do not align with the national trend to move away from juvenile confinement or our long term vision for serving our Milwaukee County juveniles and families. We are in a crisis situation. This bridge of services will provide the judiciary with immediate options. We must also work collaboratively with the State as it is their fiscal responsibility to provide safe and appropriate care for our highest risk youth. In addition, to these requests, we believe, based on our past discussions with DOC Secretary Edward F. Wall that he is interested in a collaboration to build and incorporate evidence based services that recognize youth's brain development and the impact of trauma. These efforts are already underway in our courts and our treatment community and must continue to expand in order to ensure that all Milwaukee County residents are safe.

Respectfully submitted,



Maxine Aldridge White
Chief Judge

CC: Edward F. Hall, Wisconsin Secretary of the Department of Corrections
Hector Colon, Director, Milwaukee County Department of Human Services
