

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: September 9, 2021

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Director, Department of Health and Human Services

Subject: A report from the Director, Department of Health and Human Services, providing an update on \$20 million in additional State of Wisconsin Emergency Rental Assistance (WERA1) funding and requesting authorization for an appropriation transfer to recognize this revenue

File Type: Action Report

REQUEST

This report is being submitted to update the County Board on the receipt of \$20 million in additional funding from the State of Wisconsin for Emergency Rental Assistance 1 (WERA1) funding and to seek authorization for an appropriation transfer to recognize this revenue in the 2021 DHHS Housing Division Budget.

POLICY

In May of this year, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors approved File No. 21-477 which authorized DHHS to accept \$12,666,258 in State WERA1 funding and any future allocations from the State of Wisconsin for the purpose of providing rental and utility assistance to qualifying low-income residents of the State of Wisconsin affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. In August, the State issued an amendment of \$20 million to this allocation.

Related File No's:	21-477, 21-802
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BACKGROUND

Beginning in 2020, Milwaukee County responded to the eviction crisis by funding payments to landlords to assist households that were behind in their rent and who would otherwise be facing eviction. The federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program provides funding directly to states, U.S. territories, and local governments to pay rental arrearages for low-income renters facing eviction as well as future rent and utility payments for qualifying households. Federal guidance states that the Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) funding may be used for rent, rental arrears, utilities and home energy costs, and other expenses related to housing incurred due

to the COVID-19 pandemic. DHHS Housing has received direct federal awards of \$10.6 million in ERA1 funding and \$8.4 million in ERA2 funding.

The State of Wisconsin has also received its own ERA funding and has issued a portion of its ERA1 funding, known as WERA1, to DHHS. To date, these allocations total nearly \$32.7 million.

Category	Amount	Amendment	Total
Financial Assistance	\$11,691,931	\$18,500,000	\$30,191,931
Administration/Housing Stability Services	\$974,327	\$1,500,000	\$2,474,327
State WERA Total	\$12,666,258	\$20,000,000	\$32,666,258

The Housing Division has executed contracts with Community Advocates and Hope House to operate this program. Community Advocates processes all applications for eviction prevention through its Rental Resource Center and makes all payments directly to landlords. Hope House provides rental assistance and case management to households within the City or County's housing voucher program that are facing evictions and housing instability.

Information on the number of people receiving rent assistance and the payments issued to date is included in File No. 21-802 as part of the September cycle.

Given the unprecedented community need, additional WERA funding is anticipated from the State of Wisconsin in the coming weeks. Once a final allocation is determined, DHHS will update the County Board on the status of this funding.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

This request aligns with the goal of Milwaukee County looking at services through a racial equity lens. Homelessness and housing stability disproportionately affect African-American Milwaukeeans who comprise 70 percent of the County's homeless population while being only 24.6 percent of the County's overall population.

RECOMMENDATION

The Director, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), is requesting authorization on behalf of the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) and the Comptroller to process an administrative appropriation transfer to recognize \$20 million in Emergency Rental Assistance from the State of Wisconsin.

FISCAL EFFECT

A fiscal note is attached.

TERMS

N/A

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Shakita.LaGrant@milwaukeecountywi.gov
James.Mathy@milwaukeecountywi.gov

PREPARED BY:

James Mathy, Administrator, Department of Health & Human Services – Housing Division

APPROVED BY:

Shakita LaGrant-McClain
Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Director, Department of Health & Human Services

ATTACHMENTS:

None

cc: County Executive David Crowley
Sup. Felesia Martin, Chair, Health Equity, Human Needs, Strategic Planning Committee
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Steve Cady, Research and Policy Director – Comptroller's Office
Allyson Smith, Committee Coordinator, Office of the County Clerk
Pam Matthews, Budget Analyst – DAS
Lottie Maxwell-Mitchell, Research & Policy Analyst, Comptroller's Office