

1 By Supervisors Nicholson-Bovell, Roundtree, Jr.,
2 Martin, Gómez-Tom, O'Connor, Rolland,
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4 Shea, and Eckblad

File No. 26-453

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7 **A RESOLUTION**

8
9 establishing the Milwaukee City-County Joint Taskforce to Address the Food Access
10 Crisis in Milwaukee County
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13 WHEREAS, according to the USDA in 2019, there are seven census
14 tracts that are considered to have low access to food in Milwaukee County, with
15 many more areas at high risk; and
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17 WHEREAS, on May 20, 2019, the Milwaukee County Board of
18 Supervisors declared racism a public health crisis and committed to embedding
19 racial equity into all County budgeting, policymaking, and service delivery; and
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21 WHEREAS, on November 7, 2025, the Milwaukee County Board of
22 Supervisors adopted File No. 25-705, declaring food apartheid a public health
23 emergency given that at least seven full-service grocery stores have closed in
24 the last year in Milwaukee County; and
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26 WHEREAS, as part of that legislative action, the Milwaukee County Board
27 of Supervisors requested that the Department of Health and Human Services
28 and the Office of Equity work with state, municipal, and community partners to
29 identify strategies to address food apartheid in Milwaukee County, beginning with
30 Metcalfe Park, and to provide a report during the May 2026 committee cycle with
31 recommended actions and policy options; and
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33 WHEREAS, according to the National Institutes of Health, food deserts
34 are neighborhoods and communities with limited access to affordable and
35 nutritious food, which can have significant health impacts on residents; and
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37 WHEREAS, a growing number of communities in Milwaukee County
38 qualify or may soon qualify, due to recent full-service grocery store closures; and
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40 WHEREAS, Milwaukee County launched the Building Bridges grant
41 program to invest and support small businesses in areas of Milwaukee County
42 where there are commercial growth opportunities; and
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44 WHEREAS, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors is deeply
45 concerned about the growing impacts of food deserts in Milwaukee County; and

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WHEREAS, in response to the County Board’s request (File No. 26-335), the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Equity, and the Department of Administrative Services–Economic Development submitted a report documenting recent grocery store closures, persistent food insecurity in higher-poverty neighborhoods, and the conditions contributing to food apartheid in Milwaukee County, and recommending coordinated, community-led strategies to align public-sector and community partners to address these disparities; and

WHEREAS, the report concludes that system-wide engagement among Milwaukee County, the City of Milwaukee, economic development entities, community organizations, and other stakeholders is essential to align efforts, share data, and develop a comprehensive work plan to address food access and food apartheid across municipal boundaries; and

WHEREAS, effective policy solutions require a clear understanding of the scope, causes, and geographic distribution of food deserts in Milwaukee County, as well as successful policy initiatives in other municipalities and counties like Detroit and Baltimore, which could inform potential strategies in Milwaukee County; and

WHEREAS, Milwaukee County has public facilities and agricultural land that could be reviewed for recommendations on policies and practices to promote access to nutritious food, including integrating existing food delivery businesses and County programs; and

WHEREAS, to avoid duplication of effort and maximize available tools and expertise, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors seeks to collaborate with the City of Milwaukee to address these challenges; and

WHEREAS, the Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, at its meeting of May 22, 2026, recommended adoption of File No. 26-453 (vote 5-0); now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, Milwaukee County, pending mutual affirmation, hereby establishes a joint taskforce with the City of Milwaukee named the “Milwaukee City-County Joint Taskforce to Address the Food Access Crisis” (“Taskforce”) to convene area leaders to develop practical, actionable recommendations to address food deserts in Milwaukee County; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Taskforce shall advise the City and County of Milwaukee of its recommendations, which shall include, at a minimum:

- A roadmap of measurable governmental actions to increase access to affordable and nutritious food

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- Recommended policy changes and investments to eliminate food deserts
- A process for assessing and mapping food access vulnerabilities by neighborhood and community across the County
- A list of outside experts the City and County may engage to provide technical assistance and develop a comprehensive food access plan

; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Taskforce shall be co-chaired by the Chairperson of the Milwaukee County Board or their designee, and the Milwaukee Common Council President or their designee, and shall be composed of 12 members total, including the two co-chairs and the following appointed members:

Milwaukee County (Appointed by County Board Chairperson)

- One Milwaukee County Board Supervisor that represents a district that includes a food desert (Taskforce Co-Chair)
- One non-elected Milwaukee County Community Member that has university research experience in either the health, data sciences, or marketing fields
- One representative from the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services

City of Milwaukee (Appointed by Common Council President)

- One Milwaukee Common Council member that represents a district that includes a food desert (Taskforce Co-Chair)
- One non-elected City of Milwaukee Community Member that has university research experience in either the health, data sciences, or marketing fields
- One representative from the City of Milwaukee Department of City Development

Community (jointly appointed by the Co-Chairs)

- Two appointees provided by the Food Justice Collective that live in an area designated as a food desert, such as the zip codes 53210, 53209, 53218, 53206, or the Metcalfe Park neighborhood

- 134 • One Milwaukee County Youth Commissioner, City of Milwaukee Youth
135 Council member, or a college student in a food health or urban
136 planning course from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
- 137 • One emerging community commercial real estate developer graduate
138 of the Associates in Commercial Real Estate (ACRE) training program
- 139 • One labor organizer or union representative
- 140 • One small business owner who operates a food or grocery store

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142 ; and

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144 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Milwaukee County Department of
145 Health and Human Services, Milwaukee County Office of Equity, and Milwaukee
146 County Department of Administrative Services Economic Development and Real
147 Estate Services Team are requested to assist in forming and staffing the
148 Taskforce; and

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150 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, these departments are requested to
151 prioritize use of the Building Bridges grant program to support community-led and
152 locally-owned grocery stores in underserved areas, including stabilizing and
153 expanding existing grocers, attracting new neighborhood-scale stores,
154 strengthening local food access, and to identify complementary strategies such
155 as targeted delivery, partnerships with community organizations, and use of
156 Milwaukee County land and facilities to advance food access and food justice;
157 and

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159 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, pending City-confirmation, the Office of the
160 City of Milwaukee Clerk and the Milwaukee County Clerk are requested to work
161 collaboratively and mutually support one another in carrying out committee
162 coordinator duties in accordance with Wisconsin Open Meetings requirements;
163 and

164 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, pending City-confirmation, the Co-Chairs
165 are tasked with determining the meeting time and location of the Taskforce; and
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167 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Taskforce shall convene as soon as
168 practicable and shall present its findings to the County Board and Common
169 Council within six months of its formation.

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