



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Chris Abele

MILWAUKEE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DATE: February 10, 2017

TO: The Honorable Milwaukee Board of Supervisors

FROM: Chris Abele, Milwaukee County Executive

RE: County Board File No. 17-170 changing County Board procedures for referrals

I am leaving this file unsigned because, while I respect the Board's autonomy and think the Board should be able to create your own rules, I am concerned that it radically limits the public's ability to be heard on important issues. Ordinance #17-170, as proposed, lacks clarity and makes sweeping changes to the process by which items are chosen for the public to hear.

Ordinance #17-170 makes changes to Chapter 1 of the Board's ordinances and proposes some changes that will modernize the way the County Board receives files for consideration by the public and by the County Board. The single entry point into the system and making it electronic are of enormous benefit and a boost to transparency. I support these and other changes that create efficiencies and transparency in the way the County does business. Unfortunately there are other elements of Ordinance #17-170 that could diminish the public's opportunity to be heard and decrease transparency.

Instead of the current ordinance where items must be referred for a public hearing to the appropriate committee within five days of receipt by the Board Chairman, legislation that has been proposed is now subject to "deadlines or procedure for submission established by the chairperson."

Since these procedures are not subject to County Board approval nor are they available for the public or departments, a file can sit on the Chairman's desk for months because he has not deemed his procedures or deadlines have been followed. The language that an item "was submitted in compliance with the deadline and/or procedure established by the chairperson" is concerning. For example, if the "chairperson's procedure" is that a report is not complete unless "all questions are answered," which has been the chairperson's current practice, then it would never even see the light of day on the Board's new "Item not yet referred list."

While I do not presume any ill-intent, it is my hope that these changes will be considered to ensure clarity for departments and the public. At the very least, I believe Supervisors should have the opportunity to do their own research on just how broad the implications of such changes would be. Because Legistar is the system that the public uses to see what is on an agenda, if your

goal is to increase transparency, I ask that you hold a public hearing to better understand what would make this system easier to use for our constituents.