



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Chris Abele

MILWAUKEE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DATE: July 13, 2015

TO: The Honorable Milwaukee Board of Supervisors

FROM: Chris Abele, Milwaukee County Executive

RE: County Board File No. 15-372 on a resolution creating Milwaukee County's policy on homelessness with the goal of reducing homelessness to the extent that existing financial and resource capabilities allow

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I am happy to have the opportunity to sign County Board File No. 15-372. Homelessness is an important issue to me. As the resolution states, it is a complex issue that is often caused by precipitating factors like drug and alcohol abuse, mental health issues, and a lack of affordable housing in the community. I have been and will always be committed to providing the best services that we can to continue our excellent record on housing and reduce the negative impact that can come with abuse and mental health issues.

The County has been involved in addressing homelessness and the issues that cause it for years. However, we recently decided that incremental progress was no longer enough for our community. Last month, I announced Milwaukee County's three year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness and am excited about the new and innovative approach that we are taking to the issue.

In partnership with the City of Milwaukee, the Housing Authority, and various nonprofit organizations, our plan empowers the chronically homeless by providing permanent housing that is demonstrated to yield better outcomes for the chronically homeless and the community at-large. Research demonstrates that a homeless individual or household's first and primary need is to obtain stable, affordable, quality housing. Providing quality housing offers participants the sort of stability in their lives that leads to increases in positive activities like working and keeping families together while decreasing negative activities like involvement in the criminal justice system and trips to the emergency room.

The goal of this initiative is to move individuals away from a dependence on government services and toward a support network that empowers them toward independence. Program participants will receive wraparound case management services to help address their complex needs and to help obtain employment. As a result, our initiative addresses root level causes of social issues for this population and will create a ripple effect that will benefit the entire community.

I appreciate the County Board's commitment to addressing the issue of homelessness and I look forward to continuing to work with you in the future on this critical issue.