

**Marcelia Nicholson Statement of Candidacy for Chairwoman
April 18, 2022, Organizational Meeting
2022-2024 Term of the Milwaukee County Board**

At the start of last term, the body gave me the privilege of serving as Chairwoman of the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors. With the global pandemic forcing a transition to safe virtual meetings and workspaces, nimble leadership was required. My lived and professional experiences were a right fit, and I am so proud of how we adapted and what we [adopted](#) together. With reimagining, we also utilized the virtual environment to uplift community interests during Board and Committee meetings with [backgrounds](#) and recognitions, including the Say Their Names [tribute](#), as well as recognitions for [Black](#) History Month, [Women's](#) History Month, [Asian American](#) and Pacific Islander Heritage Month and [Pride](#) Month.

That chapter is closing with the start of the 2022-2024 term, and I welcome a fresh start! Like last term, we are experiencing a one-third turnover of the Board. These routine changeovers in elected officials benefit from energetic leadership and an excitement for professional development with a focus on employee retention and attraction to maintain a diverse and consistent staff pool. With a commitment to propel the legislative body, I ask for your vote in support of my candidacy for Chairwoman of the 2022-2024 term of the Milwaukee County Board.

My commitment to an inclusive approach where Supervisor passions and talents are empowered continues. We demonstrate that voices across Milwaukee County are heard when the strength of our diverse body and different backgrounds are showcased. That each of the Supervisors who supported the nomination of a different Chair candidate in 2020 were named to committee leadership positions during the last term speaks to my fair approach. As Chairwoman, I also give space when someone else is the better person to lead on a particular issue and always encourage elected officials to connect with each other. Communication benefits the County and makes the legislative branch more effective in its pursuit of policy goals.

If elected to serve as Chairwoman, I will continue to lead with [guiding principles](#) and:

- Provide [resources](#) so Supervisors feel supported in their legislative work and district [activities](#).
- Empower Committee Chairs with the [tools](#) they need to fulfill their legislative oversight [responsibilities](#) over matters of which they have [jurisdiction](#).
- Engage the [staff](#) who support our daily operations.
- Continue to [modernize](#) the Board.

We can use what we learned during the virtual term to transition the Board to a hybrid environment, not simply roll back to outdated ways and approaches. As an example, we know that not every resident can drive to the Courthouse to share their opinions on public matters; life obligations and work responsibilities should not prevent engagement between elected representatives and their constituents. That's why the transition to a hybrid environment should

Milwaukee County Courthouse

keep open [virtual](#) access points to allow the [voices](#) of citizens and Supervisors from all walks of life to be heard in our committees.

My experience as an educator and trainer informs my leadership style. That's why the 2022-2024 welcome letter includes a coordinated rollout of [trainings](#) --with more to come--in the upcoming committee cycle! I also reached out to all county departments, like Parks, to encourage our partners to make introductions, provide tours, and connect on district priorities.

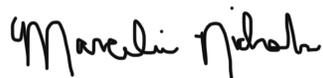
My values are rooted in the County's [vision](#) for [equity](#). Raised in 53206, I am proud of the new and bright era we see [represented](#) in Milwaukee's [leadership](#). When the County considers policies surrounding equity, my experience, having lived and breathed poverty and discrimination, brings to the table a fuller perspective on these policies than someone with a different background. These lived experiences were [highlighted](#) in the Chat with the Chair [events](#), forums for diverse constituencies and key stakeholders.

My lived experiences also help me understand and represent us all. With news that Milwaukee County would receive millions in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, I acted to ensure the County [Board](#) was a critical partner in the expenditure of those funds through the [creation](#) of the ARPA Task Force co-led by Supervisor Rolland. The ARPA Task Force provides a vehicle for the voice of the public, our strategic partners, and community groups to be [heard](#) and has been nationally [recognized](#) as a model for deliberative and [strategic](#) allocation of federal funding throughout Wisconsin.

Similarly, after we adopted a [resolution](#) calling upon all Wisconsin counties to make positive policy changes toward eliminating systemic poverty and inequality, WCA added equity to their platform thanks to our fellow Board of Directors members Supervisor Johnson Jr. and Supervisor Taylor. With the expectation that we propel our equity work forward, I delivered our message to county officials at the annual Wisconsin Counties Association conference in September. In coordination with other Milwaukee County representatives, we [led](#) a session on "Governing for Equity: Moving Towards Organizational Change" and [presented](#) at the General Assembly alongside leadership from Brown County. Through these strategic [partnerships](#), we deliver our message with impact and draw together collaborators across the State.

It is known that being the "first" to do anything brings with the label microscopic review, and initiated conversations about the Board with departing, returning, and new Supervisors. Those conversations reflect the attached about where we were, where we are, and where we are going.

Sincerely,



Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman
Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

Global Pandemic

Where We Were: Informed by public health guidance, the 2020-2022 term was a fully virtual environment. Alongside other City and County leaders, I [publicly](#) received my COVID-19 vaccination at the suggestion of Supervisor Wasserman to promote trust in public health, especially in the Black community.

Where We Are: With the 2022-2024 Organizational Meeting, Supervisors launched the Board's hybrid environment. Administrative staff returned to in-person work at the Courthouse a few days a week. New Legislative Assistant offices are being set up at the Courthouse in 2021. Our refresh continues as we create inviting spaces to welcome the public, county staff, and Supervisors to the hybrid environment.

Where We are Going: The plan is to solicit feedback from Supervisors and staff about the launch of our hybrid environment to best serve the public and district offices. I aim to hear you.

With the adoption of the new [Capital](#) Improvement Project for Health Safety and Public Access, a safe return to the Board Room also is underway.

County Board Staff

Where We Were: Lack of staff engagement, inadequate lines of communication, and isolated work environments contributed to LA turnover that disrupted district and department operations. These operational challenges led to my 2020 pledge to create an infrastructure that would empower each office to have the tools, resources, and support needed to succeed.

Where We Are: I heard your concerns about staffing. Our strategic realignment lifted staff strengths, built capacity, and created backups with [positions](#) for Deputy Chief of Staff, Constituent Services Specialists, [paid Interns](#), along with [centralized](#) assignments for [LAs](#). Now supports for Board [citations](#) and presentations, as well as [bilingual](#) constituent services, are also centrally provided. Assessments of LA preferences and district office priorities further allow for intentional matching of the Board's pooled staff talents with operational duties.

Routine meetings are scheduled for engagement, peer-to-peer support, and professional development with [training](#) opportunities. Weekly connects with district staff are led by the Lead LA. To boost morale, I also lead monthly all-staff gatherings and coordinate outings to places like our South Shore Terrace and the Zoo!

Additionally, new resources and tools to support district engagement were newly launched. Some examples are: [Sendgrid](#) for electronic newsletters; LA [permissions](#) to update district webpages; and tailored [workflow](#) guidance in recognition that every Supervisor has their own style and preferences.

Where We are Going: Focus on attraction and retention will continue with an eye on equity, as outlined in our submission of the Board's [REBT](#) (Racial Equity Budget Tool).

Ongoing check-ins with staff and initiation of performance reviews, including self-review and discussion of professional interests and development are underway.

Legislative Oversight

Where We Were: Acrimonious approaches created the perception of dysfunction in the eyes of the public.

Where We Are: The Board created a [separate](#) Committee on [Audit](#) to enhance legislative [oversight](#) of administrative operations in a forum with greater transparency. The Board also created a reimagined and expanded [Committee](#) on Health Equity, Human Needs and Strategic Planning, led by Supervisor Martin. The addition of [strategic planning](#) within that legislative committee means current policy, budget and operational decisions of all county departments can be heard in a single space versus a siloed approach.

I created [reference files](#) to support analyses of administrative operations and service delivery with a racial equity lens. These actions empower respective Committee Chairs to provide legislative oversight of matters within their jurisdiction.

The successful passage of amendments to the [2021](#) and [2022](#) County Executive's Budgets demonstrates that elected officials can collaborate to achieve a shared vision. Disagreement on policy did not prevent collaboration on matters of shared value in the interests of those we represent. With your overwhelming support, I [developed](#) a forum for policy discussions and facilitation of [oversight](#) by requesting informational reports from the Sheriff's Office, Department of Transportation, and Circuit Court to review policies and practices to achieve racial equity.

Where We are Going: I [remain](#) willing to build a bridge when we need a bridge builder but will push back against the status quo and be a fighter when we need to fight.

If elected Chairwoman, I intend to seek agreements with Committee Chairs that they will use the [tools](#) available to them for legislative oversight. I also intend to seek Board approval again for an ordinance change to allow standing committees to provide greater focus on Parks and Transit while simultaneously creating a space for focused [reporting](#) on the [County's](#) efforts to achieve adopted policy on carbon [neutrality](#) by 2050, other [green](#) initiatives like the [one](#) advanced by Supervisor Sumner, and a forum represented by Supervisor Coggs-Jones for our coordinated [intergovernmental](#) work.