

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: January 12, 2022

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

From: Alec Knutson, Director, Office of Government Affairs
Emily Petersen, Government Affairs Liaison, Office of Government Affairs

Subject: Informational Report on the Wisconsin Counties Association

File Type: Reference File Report

REQUEST

Pursuant to File No. 22-16, this update is being provided in response to the request that the Wisconsin Counties Association provide information “regarding conditions for continued membership.”

POLICY

Milwaukee County Resolution No:	21-170
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BACKGROUND

Related File No's:	22-16, 21-12, 21-170
Previous Action Date(s):	February 4, 2021

UPDATE FROM THE WISCONSIN COUNTIES ASSOCIATION

The Wisconsin Counties Association provided the Office of Government Affairs with the following report on their efforts related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in 2021.

Wisconsin Counties Magazine
(all editions can be viewed [here](#))

January 2021: Women in the Wisconsin Legislature 2021 - A Record Setting Year

February 2021:

From the Director: Black History Month
Cover Stories:

- Addressing Racial Equity in Milwaukee County
- Assembly Working Across the Aisle Addressing Racial Disparities in Wisconsin
- What Could We Do Better

- UW Population Health Institute & Racism as a Public Health Crisis
- The History of African Americans in Wisconsin
- U.S. Census Bureau Celebrates National African American (Black) History Month

May 2021: Rethinking the Money Bail System

July 2021: Equity Considerations in County Budgeting

Educational Webinar Series – February 2021

- February 1, 2021: The County Role in Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- February 8, 2021: Racism as a Public Health Crisis
- February 15, 2021: Getting Started: Moving from Words to Action
- February 22, 2021: Wisconsin County Efforts – Working with Community Partners

All webinars can be accessed here: <https://www.wicounties.org/past-event-materials/>

WCA Annual Conference

Opening remarks made to the General Assembly: Milwaukee County Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson and Brown County Executive Troy Streckenbach addressed the membership on DEI efforts

Sessions related to DEI at the Conference:

Working Toward Positive Change Against Systemic Racism and Inequality

Understanding the historical constructs of race and racism is the first step on the journey to a more just, fair, and inclusive society. The disproportionate threat of COVID-19 on Wisconsinites of color and widening racial disparity gaps in our education, healthcare, child welfare, and criminal justice systems requires a fuller examination of the ways in which racism is embedded in all of our institutions, including all levels of government. At the same time, we are experiencing an emboldened resistance to “diversity, equity, and inclusion” training necessary to challenge the inherent biases we all have as a result of racism. Milwaukee County and the YWCA of Southeast Wisconsin have been working together since 2019 to normalize conversation about race and racism in the greater Milwaukee region, modeling for Wisconsin counties and local municipalities what it takes to set a solid foundation to shift culture and practice to achieve racial equity. This program highlights how Milwaukee County and the YWCA are working together to provide the tools and supports public sector leaders and employees need to recognize and respect the diverse values, beliefs, and perspectives of those who make up their workforces and the communities they serve so that everyone has what they need to prosper and thrive.

Speakers: Martha L. Barry, PhD, Chief Racial Justice Officer, YWCA of Southeast Wisconsin; Paula Penebaker, Executive Advisor, YWCA of Southeast Wisconsin
Moderator: Jeff Roman, Executive Director, Office on African American Affairs,

Milwaukee County

Governing for Equity: Moving Toward Organizational Change

Milwaukee County is taking an all-hands approach to realizing its vision that by achieving racial equity, Milwaukee is the healthiest county in the state. The county's vision is grounded in the bold declaration Milwaukee leaders made in 2019 that racism is a public health crisis. The declaration set Milwaukee on the explicit path to eliminate health and opportunity gaps along racial lines and signals the county's long-term commitment to dismantle institutional racism and build up the policies, practices, and culture that ensures race no longer predicts health outcomes and outcomes for everyone to improve. This program highlights Milwaukee County's journey to shift organizational culture, practice, and power to increase success of all county residents and accountability measures to improve health and racial equity outcomes.

Speakers: Marcelia Nicholson, County Board Chairwoman, Milwaukee County; Jeff Roman, Executive Director, Office of African American Affairs, Milwaukee County; Isaac Rollett, Director of Strategic Planning, Office of Milwaukee County Executive
Moderator: Jeff Roman, Executive Director, Office of African American Affairs, Milwaukee County

Sent a follow up e-newsletter to members with additional materials at the request of Milwaukee County.

WCA Annual Business Meeting – September 2021

Adoption of the following resolutions:

2021 Conference Resolution 33

Milwaukee County

Calling Upon the State of Wisconsin and all Wisconsin Counties to Make Positive Policy Changes Which Will Work Toward Eliminating Systemic Poverty and Inequality

2021 Resolutions Committee Recommendation: Adopt.

2021 Conference Action: Motion by Marquette County, second by Milwaukee County, to adopt. Motion carried.

Caption: Call upon the State of Wisconsin and all Wisconsin counties to seize the moment to constructively work toward positive change against systemic racism and inequality through the creation and implementation of constructive policies addressing inequality.

2021 Conference Resolution 34

Eau Claire County

Racism is a Public Health Crisis

2021 Resolutions Committee Recommendation: Adopt.

2021 Conference Action: Motion by La Crosse County, second by Eau Claire County to adopt. Motion carried.

Caption: Urge counties to:

1. Assert that racism is a public health crisis affecting our entire society.
2. Conduct an assessment of internal policy and procedures to ensure racial equity is a core element led by people who are most impacted, the Board in collaboration with other relevant parties and community partners, communicates results of assessment, and determines appropriate intervals for ongoing reassessments.
3. Work to create an equity and justice-oriented organization, with the Board and Committees, and persons who are most impacted, in identifying specific activities to increase diversity and to incorporate anti-racist policies and principles across the county.
4. Incorporate into the organizational workplan and a county's strategic plan, educational efforts to address and dismantle racism, expand members' understanding of racism, and how racism affects individual and population health and provide tools to assist members to dismantle their own racism, and tools to assist members to engage actively and authentically with persons from underrepresented groups and persons most impacted by racism. Counties are committed to having people who are most underrepresented and most impacted lead this work.
5. Advocate for relevant policies that improve health in persons from racial minority demographics, and supports local, state, and federal initiatives that advance social justice, while also encouraging individual member advocacy to dismantle systemic racism.
6. Work to build alliances and partnerships with other organizations that are confronting racism and encourage other local, state and national entities to recognize racism as a public health crisis.

2021 Conference Resolution 35

Door County

Door County's Vision of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

2021 Resolutions Committee Recommendation: Adopt.

2021 Conference Action: Motion by Door County, second by Kewaunee County, to adopt. Motion carried.

Caption: Support the following:

- That all county residents and visitors shall be treated with respect and integrity.
- Encourage all counties to support policies that improve access and remove gaps along social and economic constructs and advance the understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Recognize that every elected and appointed official and employee is responsible for creating and maintaining a culture in which we respect diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workforce and the community they serve.
- Encourage advocacy, by institutions and individuals, to dismantle barriers and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Encourage county administration and departments to monitor and report on measurable progress made towards diversity, equity, and inclusion.

2021 Conference Resolution 37

Eau Claire County

Requesting the State of Wisconsin Strengthen its Hate Crime Statute, Wis. Stat. § 939.645, to Provide Enhanced Security to Members of Wisconsin's Marginalized Communities

2021 Resolutions Committee Recommendation: Adopt.

2021 Conference Action: Motion by Rusk County, second by Trempealeau County, to adopt. Motion carried.

Caption: Request that the legislature and the governor of the state of Wisconsin enact legislation to modify Wis. Stat. § 939.645, as set forth below, by making the following changes:

- 939.645 (1) If a person does ~~all~~ any of the following, the penalties for the underlying crime are increased as provided in sub. (2):
- 939.645 (1) (b) Intentionally selects the person against whom the crime under par. (a) is committed or selects the property that is damaged or otherwise affected by the crime under par. (a) in whole or in part because of the actor's belief, values, or perception regarding the race, religion, color, disability, sexual orientation, national origin or ancestry, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, or veteran's status of that person or the owner or occupant of that property, whether or not the actor's belief, values, or perception was correct.
- 939.645 (1) (c) The use of gay/transgender panic defenses is forbidden.
- 939.645 (4) This section does not apply to any crime if proof of race, religion, color, disability, sexual orientation, national origin or ancestry, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, or veteran's status or proof of any person's perception or belief regarding another's race, religion, color, disability, sexual orientation, national origin or ancestry, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, or veteran's status is required for a conviction for that crime.
- 939.645 (5) This section mandates that hate crime data be collected, retained, and made publicly available based on demographic statistics by the Attorney General of the State of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Department of Justice.
- 939.645 (6) this section requires law enforcement officers and officials to receive specialized hate crime training and continuing education on a biennial basis.

Upcoming Activities:

- County 21-Day Equity Challenge
- DEI Regional meetings

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Describe how the item aligns to the objectives in the [strategic plan](#):

2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions

3A: Invest “upstream” to address root causes of health disparities

3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities

Milwaukee County’s contribution and participation in the Wisconsin Counties Association helps foster positive relationships across the state and draws attention to our mission. With the support of the Wisconsin Counties Association, the importance of achieving racial equity is highlighted in statewide publications, at the annual conference, and to all member counties, reaching a larger audience than Milwaukee County would be able to on its own. Communication between the Wisconsin Counties Association and the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors through these informational reports helps apply a racial equity lens to all decisions by ensuring that our strategic goals are aligned.

FISCAL EFFECT

This is an informational report and has no fiscal effect.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

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