

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE Inter-Office Communication

To: Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson
Board of Supervisors

From: Israel Ramón, Register of Deeds

Date: July 5th 2022

Re: Informational Report – Status and Use of Free Birth Certificate Program

Background:

The Free Birth Certificate Program (FBCP) was initially passed by the County Board in 2012. It allows Milwaukee County residents to reduce impediments to voting and youth employment by directing the Register of Deeds Office to issue a certain number of free birth certificates to county residents if the residents attest that they are utilizing the birth certificates for the stated purpose of the program and have not previously been issued a free certificate by the Register of Deeds Office. In addition, the FBCP also includes county residents between the ages of 15 and 21 to request free birth certificates to satisfy requests from perspective employers. The Register of Deeds Office is directed to continue to require that residents seeking a free birth certificate under the program complete and sign a form attesting to the purpose of the request and that they have not previously been issued a birth certificate under the program.

In its 2020 Adopted Budget Amendment - 1A001 (Org. Units 3400 Register of Deeds & 1800-1993 State Shared Taxes), the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors reauthorized the FBCP to allow the issuance of an additional 1,000 birth certificates for voting or youth jobs. The Register of Deeds was requested to provide a report to the County Board of Supervisors no later than the July meeting cycle on the status and use of the program. The total free birth certificates remaining in 2019 were 120. The Board of Supervisors authorized an additional 1,000 in 2020. Thus, the total free birth certificates as of January 2020 was 1,120. This report will correct the report filed in 2021 which noted a lesser amount.

Out of the 1,120 birth certificates available at the start of 2020, 169 were issued that year; 13 were issued in 2021; and 9 were issued in 2022. The amount remaining under the FBCP as of 7/1/2022 are 929. Please see below:

<u>Year</u>	<u>BC Issued – Voting</u>	<u>BC Issued – Youth Jobs</u>	<u>BC Remaining (1,120)</u>
2020	87	82	951
2021	9	4	938
2022	7	2	929

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic and ROD Reopening

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, overall vital records requests dropped significantly as well as requests under the FBCP. The ROD lobby was closed to the public from March 2020 to July 2021. Nonetheless, vital records under the FBCP continued to be issued during the closed lobby period via mail-in applications, email, and fax. Currently, county residents are able to order vital records through their smart phones, online ordering, and applications sent to the office by US mail, drop box, and fax.

Budget Impact

In 2020, the County Board of Supervisors authorized \$15,000 for the FBCP. Reports and Funds Transfers are submitted biannually to the State Department of Administration. For each record issued, the ROD Office submits \$15 to the State of Wisconsin as per applicable Wisconsin statutes.

Conclusion

The Register of Deeds Office is fully supportive of the FBCP but encourages supervisors to advertise the program through the Milwaukee County website, newsletters, community events/forums and direct contact with nonpartisan voting rights and youth groups. For further questions or comments, please feel free to call (414) 278-3083 or (414) 639-7887.

Respectfully submitted,

Israel Ramón

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Milwaukee County Register of Deeds

Signed by means of electronic communication