

Committee on Finance on 2023-03-16 9:00 AM - REVISION #2
Please note the addition of Item 6, File No. 23-411.

VIRTUAL MEETING

This meeting will be live-streamed on the County Legislative Information Center:

<https://milwaukeecounty.legistar.com/Calendar>.

Meeting Time: 03-16-23 09:00

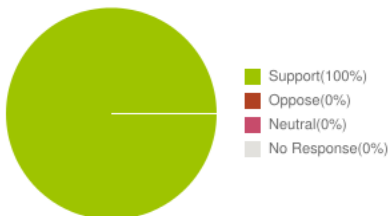
eComments Report

Meetings	Meeting Time	Agenda Items	Comments	Support	Oppose	Neutral
Committee on Finance on 2023-03-16 9:00 AM - REVISION #2 Please note the addition of Item 6, File No. 23-411.	03-16-23 09:00	45	2	2	0	0
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Sentiments for All Meetings

The following graphs display sentiments for comments that have location data. Only locations of users who have commented will be shown.

Overall Sentiment



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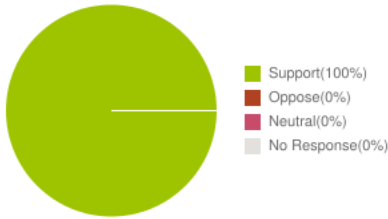
03-16-23 09:00

Agenda Name	Comments	Support	Oppose	Neutral
4 23-377 A resolution appropriating \$1,613,988 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to purchase and forgive approximately \$153 million of Milwaukee County residents' medical debt, supporting approximately 67,000 neighbors-in-need	1	1	0	0
19 23-389 A resolution authorizing an appropriation transfer of \$52,229 from Agency 194-1945 - Appropriation for Contingencies to newly created capital project WD0201 Wil-o-Way Facility Improvements. (Referred to the Committees on Parks and Culture; and Finance)	1	1	0	0

Sentiments for All Agenda Items

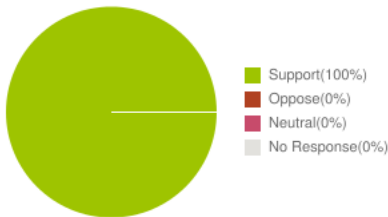
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Overall Sentiment



Agenda Item: eComments for 4 23-377 A resolution appropriating \$1,613,988 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to purchase and forgive approximately \$153 million of Milwaukee County residents' medical debt, supporting approximately 67,000 neighbors-in-need

Overall Sentiment



Tim Hennigan

Location:

Submitted At: 10:10am 03-16-23

I work for ABC for Health, a nonprofit, public interest law firm that helps Wisconsin residents with issues relating to health coverage and medical debt. We are happy to see that Milwaukee County intends to tackle the issue of medical debt. However, we believe that RIP Medical Debt's approach does not work on its own. Forgiving medical debt certainly has immediate positive impact, but does little to effect systemic change. Therefore, we support the proposed amendment, introduced by Supervisor Martinez, to shift some of the funds towards long-term solutions to medical debt.

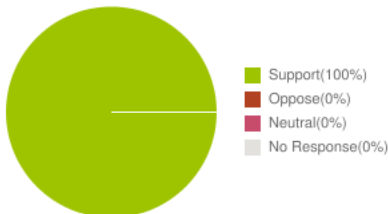
Working directly with patients, we have seen that health benefits programs are severely underutilized, which is a major contributing factor in medical debt, especially for low-income patients. We have done research showing that 99% of patients who are sued for medical debt are not represented by an attorney. We are concerned that a large amount of medical debt being forgiven by RIP Medical Debt is audited for legitimacy in the first place. The proposed amendment would work to connect Milwaukee residents with resources to prevent and challenge inappropriate medical debt.

We also know that hospitals are major drivers of medical debt. In our aforementioned research, we saw that even nonprofit hospitals sue their patients in large numbers. This is on top of credit reporting and other collections activities that can ruin patients' lives. Therefore, we also support language conditioning the purchase of debt directly from hospitals on a commitment from hospitals to improve their practices to help lessen the amount of harm they cause to their patients through medical debt. This could include changing their policy to halt lawsuits and/or credit reporting, improving efforts to connect patients with health coverage, and removing barriers to hospital financial assistance programs.

RIP Medical Debt's work is certainly commendable. However, it does not function alone. If Milwaukee County is truly committed to fighting medical debt, the proposal needs to include more long-term and systemic solutions. One-time debt forgiveness may help with one bill, but connecting patients with coverage has far more payoff, and improves health outcomes by allowing patients to continue receiving care without worrying about the cost.

Agenda Item: eComments for 19 23-389 A resolution authorizing an appropriation transfer of \$52,229 from Agency 194-1945 - Appropriation for Contingencies to newly created capital project WD0201 Wil-o-Way Facility Improvements. (Referred to the Committees on Parks and Culture; and Finance)

Overall Sentiment



Anne Kearney

Location:

Submitted At: 8:47am 03-16-23

The Wil-O-Way repairs and improvements for which funds are being requested are vital to ensure the safety and access necessary for year-round programming for individuals with disabilities. Thank you for your consideration. Anne Kearney, citizen, attorney, Commissioner Milwaukee County Commission for Persons with Disabilities