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A resolution by Supervisors Taylor, Johnson, Jr., and Shea in support of Wisconsin draft Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) Bill 1522/P1 that seeks to restore voting rights to people on probation and parole and decrease felony disenfranchisement in the State of Wisconsin, by recommending adoption of the following:

A RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, felony disenfranchisement is defined as the loss of a person's voting rights due to a felony conviction; and

WHEREAS, in the State of Wisconsin (the State), a person is not eligible to vote if they have been convicted of a felony, and are currently serving any portion of their sentence including extended supervision, probation, and/or parole; and

WHEREAS, rates of disenfranchisement vary drastically by state due to broad variations in voting prohibitions; and

WHEREAS, as reported by The Sentencing Project, 30 states deny voting rights to felony probationers, 34 states disenfranchise parolees, and 12 states deny voting rights to some or all individuals who have successfully fulfilled their prison, parole, or probation sentence; and

WHEREAS, Maine and Vermont are the only two states that do not disenfranchise felons; and

WHEREAS, as of December 2016, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, United States (U.S.) Department of Justice, reported there were an estimated 4.5 million adults in the U.S. under community supervision, probation, or parole, and of that amount, 64,900 were residents of the State; and

WHEREAS, the Ex-Incarcerated People Organizing (EXPO) group reports that in 2016, the average length of stay for parole in the State was estimated to be 38 months, or a little over three years, which makes the State third in the nation for probation and parole sentences, as reported by the EXPO group; and

WHEREAS, the EXPO group further reports that the average duration for parole across all states is estimated to be 22 months; and

WHEREAS, a report by the Advancement Project titled, "*Democracy Disappeared How Florida Silences the Black Vote through Felony Disenfranchisement*," published October 2018, suggests that the consequences of felony disenfranchisement disproportionately impact poor communities and communities of color, which are likely to have high concentrations of returning citizens who are disenfranchised; and

47 WHEREAS, the report further indicates that losing the right to vote is linked to
48 socio-economic conditions, as felony disenfranchisement converges with low income,
49 poverty, limited education, and employment opportunities, to disempower entire
50 communities; and

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52 WHEREAS, the inability for disenfranchised people convicted of a felony to
53 participate in the political process limits their power to overcome inequality and systemic
54 injustice, and isolates them from society; and

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56 WHEREAS, the Advancement Project reports that when large numbers of
57 citizens are not allowed to vote, entire constituencies may go unrepresented in the
58 democratic institutions that govern them; and

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60 WHEREAS, under Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) draft
61 legislation 1522/P1, a person would lose his or her right to vote based on a disqualifying
62 offense only while he or she is incarcerated for that offense, and a person that is
63 released to extended supervision or parole may resume voting; and

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65 WHEREAS, additionally, LRB 1522/P1 would allow a person convicted of a
66 disqualifying offense and on probation retain his or her right to vote unless he or she is
67 confined as a condition of probation; and

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69 WHEREAS, EXPO, Wisconsin Affiliate of the Gamaliel Foundation, the American
70 Civil Liberties Union, Project Return, Wisconsin Voices, League of Women Voters, and
71 JustLeadershipUSA, plans to launch the “Unlock the Vote” Campaign seeking to
72 reengage 64,900 disenfranchised voters; and

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74 WHEREAS, felony disenfranchisement is a major social issue across the U.S.
75 that adversely affects more than 4 million people, including 64,900 people in the State,
76 and it is a constitutional right that every citizen should be allowed the right to vote; and

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78 WHEREAS, the Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, at its meeting of
79 September 5, 2019, recommended adoption of File No. 19-631 (vote 4-1); now,
80 therefore,

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82 BE IT RESOLVED, Milwaukee County (the County) supports Wisconsin
83 Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) draft legislation 1522/P1 that seeks to restore
84 voting rights to disenfranchised felons, and efforts to reduce felony disenfranchisement
85 and reform practices that disproportionately impacts communities of color in the State of
86 Wisconsin (the State), and the United States; and

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88 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the County supports a comprehensive review and
89 revision of the State's sentencing guidelines, parole processes, and revocation
90 processes to ensure that best practices are being followed; and

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92 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the County supports LRB 1522/P1, which is
93 anticipated to be introduced soon, and requests Government Affairs staff to
94 communicate this position to the State Legislature and the Governor in support of its
95 passage.
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