



December 18, 2020

Dear Supervisor Czarnezki and Clerk Christenson,

Thank you for today's letter to the Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) regarding Milwaukee County's dues for 2021. Given that many of the items raised by the county require action by the WCA Board of Directors or county board chairs at the WCA Annual Business Meeting, I thought it appropriate, as Chair of the WCA Board, I respond to your letter on behalf of the association.

First, I strongly encourage Milwaukee to retain its membership in WCA for 2021. Milwaukee County is a valued member of WCA and we are stronger as counties when we speak together. The challenges counties face are similar in all of our counties; the magnitude of the challenge is of course greater in counties with greater populations. The association has stated on countless occasions that as goes the economy of the major metropolitan area of a state, so goes the state's economy. This means that Wisconsin's success depends on Milwaukee's success. In that same vein, Milwaukee's success likely requires other parts of the state to assist in that success. Membership in WCA most certainly increases the likelihood of mutual gain.

Milwaukee County's letter details eight items the county requests in order to maintain its 2021 association membership. While I understand and appreciate the items outlined in the letter, it is important to note that these conditions cannot be addressed by staff action nor by action of any individual, including myself as WCA Chair. Rather, some of the items raised require action by the WCA Board of Directors while others require WCA Constitution changes which necessitate action by county board chairs at the September WCA Annual Business meeting.

As a membership organization, modifications to the association's structure and operations require action by the membership. While this sometimes results in change not occurring as quickly as some would like, it does ensure all counties have a voice in how the association looks and operates. It is for this reason that I am unable to unilaterally make promises on the specific items listed in your letter, regardless of my personal feelings on these matters. I will note, however, that the WCA Board of Directors at its December 11 board meeting took favorable action on Milwaukee County's resolution on racial equity principles and collaborative engagement. In addition, the WCA Board of Directors approved creation of a Constitution Committee and my appointments to the

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committee including a representative from Milwaukee County, provided the county is an association member. It is through this Constitution Committee process that some of Milwaukee County's requests, such as a reduction of dues, could be considered.

While I believe the WCA Board of Directors may see value in exploring the topics raised in your letter, I am unable to preempt their consideration by making guarantees on the specific items raised as a condition of association membership. I can, however, envision serious discussion and potential consideration. I strongly believe such discussions will be more informed and productive if Milwaukee County, as a WCA member, is at the table during these conversations and can lend its perspective. I have long believed that the way to affect structure or policy of an organization is to be part of the organization. I encourage Milwaukee County to maintain membership in WCA and advance proposals which strengthen the organization.

I cannot overstate the value I, and the WCA staff, believe Milwaukee County brings to the association. I hope the county will choose to pay its 2021 dues so that Milwaukee County retains its representation on the WCA Board of Directors, the association's steering committees and the newly-created WCA Constitution Committee. While our association is viewed as one of the most successful and well run counties associations in the country, no association is perfect. We all strive to make our respective counties and association better. I believe WCA is a better association with Milwaukee County's membership. Thank you for your participation in WCA and thank you for your service to county government!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lance A. Pliml". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lance" and the last name "Pliml" clearly visible.

Lance Pliml
Chairman, WCA Board of Directors

cc: WCA Board of Directors
Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley
Mark D. O'Connell, WCA Executive Director