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February 22, 2021

Margaret Daun
Milwaukee County Corporation Counsel
Courthouse, Room 303
Milwaukee, WI 53233

DELIVERED VIA EMAIL

Dear Corporation Counsel Daun,

Thank you for your recent letter of February 16, 2021. We look forward to working with your office and Milwaukee County to better strengthen our valuable partnership in the coming weeks and months. We agree that an improved relationship between the Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) and Milwaukee County cannot be achieved through a single letter, but we wanted to ensure that you received our initial response so the Milwaukee County Board may have sufficient time to review prior to its meeting on February 24, as you requested.

Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

WCA is committed to increasing understanding of racial justice issues and to real improvements in racial equity statewide. The WCA Board of Directors in 2020 adopted a resolution that publicly identified racism as a public health crisis and acknowledged systemic racism (attached hereto). WCA also held a four part webinar series on diversity and inclusion in early 2021 that received incredible interest and attendance (<https://www.wicounties.org/past-event-materials/>) In addition, the February edition of the WCA magazine was dedicated to celebrating Black History Month.

But more can be done. Like many advocacy organizations prior to 2020, racial equity was not the priority it should have been. At WCA, it now is. We commit to the consistent effort and deliberate attention that racial equity requires and embrace the opportunity to partner with Milwaukee County to do so. We will evaluate the most effective way to address racial equity in our next legislative agenda for consideration by the WCA Board.

MARK D. O'CONNELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Specifically, in your letter, you indicated Milwaukee County's willingness to assist WCA in our continued work on racial equity. We look forward to working with Milwaukee County to improve our outreach and education efforts. Milwaukee County continues to lead on issues of diversity and antiracism and we intend to learn from and partner with the County to help make racial equity a reality statewide.

Transparency

WCA is eager to assist Milwaukee County in understanding the association's decision making process and financial health. All of WCA's policy positions and subsequent lobbying is driven by our legislative platform. Positions in the platform are adopted by either the WCA Board of Directors or the membership at the annual business meeting. WCA does not take positions on legislation without an applicable platform position to guide its lobbying activity.

WCA is committed to working directly with Milwaukee County on legislative initiatives. While we have offered to have formal communication with the County through appearance at the County's Intergovernmental Relations Committee, we also believe it would be productive to have quarterly meetings with the County Executive, County Board Chairwoman, and the County's lobbyists to discuss legislative efforts. While these meetings would ensure increased communication, we do not view these meetings as a substitute for frequent exchanges currently occurring between WCA and Milwaukee County's lobbyist on issues before the Wisconsin State Legislature.

With regard to the association's finances, WCA is committed to working with the Office of Corporation Counsel to provide the county a clearer picture of the association's operations. Much of the information requested in your letter is currently provided to the WCA Board of Directors. Board members receive copies of the WCA audit or audit review annually. In addition, a comprehensive budget is presented each December to members of the Board of Directors for approval.

Accountability

With respect to conflicts of interest, we will work with the Office of Corporation Counsel to better understand the County's concerns and to take affirmative steps to avoid any conflicts among members and/or positions taken by WCA and members. We are open to considering policy improvements and look forward to that discussion. Any current or future outside legal counsel to WCA must undertake a formalized and "best in class" conflicts of interest review on an annual basis. In addition, as you are aware, your office

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and current outside counsel have established frequent communications to avoid any indirect conflicts that would not otherwise be identified in a formal conflicts process.

The association is also committed to working with county clerks to support the critical role they play in election administration throughout the state and to assure Wisconsin voters that past and future elections are free of fraud and that all legal votes are counted. This will be especially important in the coming weeks as legislation is introduced relating to state election law. WCA will also be working with county clerks on redistricting issues resulting from a delay in the receipt of data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Regarding issues raised in your letter of February 16, but not addressed explicitly here, we will be pleased to engage in continuing discussions with your office to address any matters of additional interest.

Again, thank you for your letter and I hope my response provides clarity to your office and Milwaukee County. We look forward to continuing conversations with your office in the coming weeks. WCA is committed to working with Milwaukee County and we firmly believe WCA membership is a benefit to Milwaukee County and its citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark D. O'Connell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mark D. O'Connell
Executive Director