By Supervisors Nicholson and Sumner File No. 21-329

**A RESOLUTION**

honoring Women’s History Month, requesting an audit on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the intersection of gender and racial equity in Milwaukee County, and requesting the Department of Human Resources provide information on policy changes needed to improve racial and gender equity for female employees

WHEREAS, March is Women’s History Month, an annual celebration of the contributions of women to society and March 8th is annual International Women’s Day; and

WHEREAS, in the United States, Women’s History Month has been officially declared via Presidential Proclamation every year since 1988; and

WHEREAS, the National Women’s History Alliance announced the 2021 theme of Women’s History Month as “Valiant Women of the Vote: Refusing to be Silenced,” an extension of the 2020 theme for the centennial celebration of women’s suffrage; and

WHEREAS, women’s history, over time, has been reduced to a few key individuals instead of an intensive study of how women have shaped and propelled society forward; and

WHEREAS, a 2017 report titled “Where are the Women?” from the National Women’s History Museum found that most K-12 curriculum standards focused on the inclusion of specific topics, for example the American Revolution, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Labor Rights Movement, but that there was no requirement that the contributions of women during these time periods be included; and

WHEREAS, the report determined that male figures are three times more likely to be featured than female figures and that states can continue to meet their curriculum requirements by including the woman’s perspective, role, or contributions in to what they are already mandated to teach; and

WHEREAS, gender equity plays an important role not only across the world, but at Milwaukee County; and

WHEREAS, the audit report included in File No. 20-205 found that female employees earned less than male employees in every year that was reviewed, but that women were nearly half of the County’s top 100 earners, although 52 percent of Milwaukee County employees in 2019 were women; and

WHEREAS, the audit report also indicated that gender equity varied by department with women comprising 15 percent of the transportation function and only three percent of the fleet management division; and

WHEREAS, these findings are compounded when you consider the intersection of race and gender as the audit report found that Black employees were the lowest earning group in three out of the four years reviewed and Black women make up 70 percent of all Black employees; and

WHEREAS, intersectionality is the interconnectedness of social categorizations such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status, which create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; and

WHEREAS, to encourage the retention of employees and promote diversity, it is in the best interests of Milwaukee County to conduct an audit on gender equity, alongside the intersection of racial equity, in the workforce, including how the COVID-19 pandemic effects Milwaukee County’s female employees; and

WHEREAS, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Milwaukee County has taken steps to mitigate adverse effects on its employees through the release of several Administrative Orders; and

WHEREAS, the Federal government expanded Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provisions to include the option to take time off to care for children, either because of illness or child care and school closures; and

WHEREAS, the expanded FMLA provision was not extended in to 2021 and, because it is a Federal program, Milwaukee County does not have the ability to change FMLA usage for its employees; and

WHEREAS, Administrative Order 21-1 Expanded Pay Sick Leave was approved through File No. 21-197, which provides employees with an additional 80 hours of sick leave if they are unable to work or unable to telework due to symptoms of, exposure to, or confirmed cases of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the Expanded Pay Sick Leave Order does not allow employees to take time off to care for a dependent with COVID-19 or because of child care or school closures and no additional measures have been enacted to do so; and

WHEREAS, women are often responsible for caring for children, whether they are sick, need to go to a medical appointment, or encounter child care issues, requiring that they use other leave banks; and

WHEREAS, if workplaces do not allow flexibility for its female employees with children, they are faced with the possibility that they may need to quit in order to provide child care or assist with virtual schooling; and

WHEREAS, Reuters found that 2.5 million women have exited the workforce during the pandemic, compared to 1.8 million men; and

WHEREAS, the New York Times reported that 32 percent of women who have left the workforce during the pandemic identified child care as the reason; and

WHEREAS, leaving the workforce early, even if temporary, has long-term implications for women, including difficulty re-entering, missing out on potential raises, which men are receiving instead, and losing vital contributions to retirement accounts; and

WHEREAS, a study cited by CNBC found that about a third of respondents took a cut pay in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but that only 44 percent of women eventually had their pay restored, compared to 52 percent of men and it also found that 58 percent of men received a raise in 2020, compared to 48 percent of women; and

WHEREAS, beyond the workplace, women are frequently tasked with “invisible work” in their homes, communities, and private lives and these contributions, because they are unpaid and women are seen as being “naturally” suited for them, are often devalued, according to Arlene Kaplan Daniels seminal article in *Social Problems*; and

WHEREAS, as a result, women are obligated to juggle myriad responsibilities that men traditionally do not, leading to their exit from the workforce because many workplaces do not have policies and procedures in place to accommodate these differences; and

WHEREAS, the Milwaukee County Department of Human Resources has committed to addressing racial and gender equity in its hiring and employment practices and evaluating our policies is a continuous process; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that Milwaukee County honors March as Women’s History Month and the contributions that women make, not only to society as a whole, but in Milwaukee County; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors hereby requests that the Audit Services Division in the Office of the Comptroller perform an audit on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Milwaukee County’s workforce and the impact of the Administrative Orders released throughout 2020 and 2021 on employees, with an emphasis on understanding the impact to female employees and the intersection of race and gender on equity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors hereby requests that the audit explore areas such as:

* the impact of Administrative Orders related to teleworking (20-3) and Expanded Pay Sick Leave (21-1), including the effect that the Orders have on providing childcare
* separation rates of County employees since March 2020
* hiring data during the pandemic

; and

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED, that the Department of Human Resources shall provide a report analyzing policy changes that could be implemented to improve racial and gender equity in Milwaukee County’s hiring and employment practices, including the continued ability for teleworking, standardized sick leave policies, and the mutual benefit of providing flexibility to the employee and employer; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Milwaukee County is committed to improving the workplace for all employees and the continued improvement of its policies and procedures to improve employee satisfaction and retention.