

Milwaukee County Executive Abele: Milwaukee County DHHS Director Colón tapped to lead Lutheran Social Services

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MILWAUKEE – Following six years of distinguished service to Milwaukee County as director of the Department of Health and Human Services, Héctor Colón has been tapped to bring his values-driven leadership to Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, a faith-based organization that provides social services to people of all faiths and backgrounds.

Under Colón's leadership, DHHS has made great strides in improving the health and well-being of our entire community. From winning President Barack Obama's White House Healthy Communities Challenge by having the largest percentage increase in healthcare enrollment in the country, with a 58 percent reduction in Milwaukee County's uninsured rate, to decreasing chronic homelessness by more than 75 percent — faster than any other metro area in the country — and leading the charge to implement meaningful reforms in our juvenile justice system and bring youths back from Lincoln Hills, Colón has been a force for change in Milwaukee County.

“When I say that tens of thousands of lives in Milwaukee County are better today

than they were six years ago because of Héctor Colón and his team at the Department of Health and Human Services it's not an exaggeration," County Executive Chris Abele said. "Héctor is an inspired leader who motivates the people around him to do bigger and better things than they thought were possible. While I'm sad to see Héctor leave the County, I know he will still be making a positive difference in our community. I also know that the culture of pride, excellence, and 'doing the right thing' that he's instilled at DHHS will ensure that the department continues to provide top-notch service in his absence. I wish Héctor all the best in his new role with Lutheran Social Services."

"I want to thank County Executive Chris Abele for giving me the incredible opportunity to serve as Milwaukee County's Director of Health and Human Services," Mr. Colón said. "During my six years, we built partnerships, developed award-winning programs and brought innovative strategies to government that transformed services for our most vulnerable, while saving taxpayers millions. The county executive's commitment to bringing top talent to Milwaukee County, challenging his leadership team, and supporting our work enabled DHHS to accomplish more than anyone expected we could. I will be forever grateful for my time at DHHS."

In addition to winning the White House Challenge and making significant progress on ending chronic homelessness, Milwaukee County under Héctor Colón also ended a 30 year wait list for people who need long term care supports to live in the community; ended a 12 year Section 8 housing waiting list; transitioned hundreds of people with mental illness and intellectual disabilities out of long-term care units and into community living arrangements; implemented over 25 million dollars of new or enhanced community based services that have led to a 34% decrease in emergency detentions and a 24% decrease in emergency room visits; and has worked to reduce stigma associated with mental illness.

Mr. Colón will remain with Milwaukee County through the end of the month, after which he will begin his new position as President and CEO of LSS. DHSS Chief Operating Officer Jeanne Dorff will serve as interim director of the department while the county executive begins a comprehensive search for a new permanent director.

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