

# ACLU of Wisconsin: Legal professionals ask Milwaukee City Attorney dismiss protest-related Municipal citations

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MILWAUKEE – The ACLU of Wisconsin, along with more than 35 other legal professionals and organizations, submitted a letter on Wednesday to Milwaukee City Attorney Tearman Spencer demanding that the hundreds of protest-related municipal citations be dismissed.

In the letter, the ACLU of Wisconsin asked Spencer to follow the lead of New York, where District Attorneys in Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx announced they would not prosecute people arrested and accused of low-level offenses, such as disorderly conduct and unlawful assembly, during the protests.

“Local leadership is essential for the safety of our communities and the vitality of our democracy. You can change the course of this moment and our history by breaking with harmful tactics of the past and demonstrating a new kind of leadership for the future,” the letter said. “ We feel that under your new leadership, the City Attorney’s Office can step up and ensure the equitable administration of justice for all the residents of Milwaukee.”

Although there is not yet available systematic data on the individuals who have received tickets, the letter states, anecdotally it appears that citations were disproportionately issued to young Black men, further exacerbating the disparities we see throughout our criminal legal system.

“As I am sure you know, even municipal citations have negative consequences for

employment, housing, and other aspects of life. Particularly for people with limited financial means, unpaid fines and fees can result in jail time, lost driving privileges, unmanageable debt burdens and burdensome collection procedures,” the letter states. “The \$691 fine for curfew tickets represents a substantial amount of money for people with no or limited discretionary income.”

Although various organizations are working to connect those cited with legal representation, the letter points out that the dismissal of the citations before initial appearances would avoid an unnecessary backup of the municipal court’s docket.