

Barkow campaign: Reiterates call for independent ombudsman, details strategy to increase jail transparency

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Brian Barkow, candidate for Milwaukee County Sheriff, issued the following statement today:

“It is essential that we make the Milwaukee County Jail more transparent and more accountable to our community. I am the *only* candidate in the August 9 Democratic primary for sheriff who has offered clear steps forward to achieve these goals:

- **I will establish an independent ombudsman to provide oversight and investigative authority over the county jail.** I will work with the County Executive and County Board to establish an independent ombudsman authority for the Milwaukee County Jail. The ombudsman will not report to the sheriff and will not be subject to termination by the sheriff. The ombudsman, and designated personnel, will have the authority to inspect and monitor day-to-day conditions in the jail, meet with jail staff to identify challenges, and receive and independently investigate complaints about jail conditions, treatment, and health services. Persons in custody, their family members and acquaintances, and jail employees will all be allowed to share information confidentially with the ombudsman, and be free from retaliation. Furthermore, the ombudsman will have the authority to publicly report its investigative findings, both to the County Board and to the community at large.
- **I will establish a Community Advisory Council to build greater engagement between the Sheriff’s Office and our community.** More must be done to build greater engagement between the Sheriff’s Office and

community organizations on pre-trial detention issues. When I establish the first-ever Community Advisory Council for the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office, I will ensure that community advocates and directly impacted citizens are at the table, alongside career experts in jail administration. Furthermore, I will organize open sessions of the Community Advisory Council at which members of our community can present concerns (and recommendations) regarding jail operations and receive responses directly from the Council and from me.

- **I will create public-facing online dashboards that allow our community to monitor jail operations** Using my expertise in data management, I will build easy-to-use online dashboards that will allow the public to review anonymized jail data (the jail population, the number of daily bookings and releases, and the number of individuals awaiting intake) as well as substantive information about the jail (data regarding disciplinary referrals, confrontations, uses of force, and adverse medical outcomes).

“We need to do more to make the Milwaukee County Jail an accountable and transparent institution that upholds the highest standards of safety, dignity, and professionalism. Alone of the three candidates on the ballot for sheriff, I have outlined a [detailed plan to transform the long-troubled jail facility into a](#)