

KINGFISHmke: Is Wisconsin Department of Justice attempting to cover-up a criminal investigation?

Posted on Monday, Mar 21, 2022

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March 21, 2022

In June 2018 the Milwaukee advocacy group, Freshwater for Life Action Coalition (FLAC), and coalition partners of the group, met with Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chisholm to file a formal request for an investigation into the Milwaukee Health Department Lead Program, after a scathing report by the state was released, following the resignation of Milwaukee Health Department Commissioner, Bevan Baker.

The state report found massive failures within the Milwaukee Health Department's lead program. FLAC demanded an investigation after the state report found that 91% of cases of kids with elevated lead levels were closed without meeting minimum state statutes for closing them although the City of Milwaukee was compensated by the state's Department of Health Services had compensated the city for properly closing the cases.

FLAC presented the DA with evidence indicating that once the cases are closed, City officials would then request from the state reimbursement for services that were never rendered. The group asked the DA to investigate if City officials ever received reimbursements for those cases fraudulently.

Several months after FLAC met with the DA a letter from former Common Council President Ashanti Hamilton and former Alderman and now mayoral candidate Robert Donovan, formerly requested that the DA open a criminal investigation of

the Milwaukee Health Department Lead Program. The DA upon receipt of the letter confirmed for the first time in public that a criminal investigation had been started.

In April 2019, FLAC and coalition partners met with the DA for an update of the investigation. It was revealed during this meeting that the DA had referred the criminal case to the Wisconsin Department of Justice for further investigation. It stands to reason that if there was nothing to the criminal complaint, why move the case to the state Department of Justice (DOJ).

In 2020 several emails between KINGFISHmke and a representative of the Wisconsin Department of Justice showed either ineptness or an attempt to dismiss the criminal investigation by the DOJ. The emails show that at first a DOJ official was not aware of a criminal investigation of the Milwaukee Health Department Lead Program. The official stated there was nothing on DOJ records showing and investigation existed.

KINGFISHmke, after pressing the matter further, was then told via email, a few days later, that there was a criminal investigation on record but that the DOJ official could not elaborate on the investigation.

It is now almost three years that this criminal investigation of the Milwaukee Health Department Lead Program has been going on and the DOJ has yet to indicate how the investigation is going or if charges will be filed. Numerous requests by several elected officials including Alderpersons, State Representatives and State Senators have been sent to the DOJ requesting the status of the criminal investigation. Everyone was responded with a back handed response by the DOJ who refused to give an update on the investigation.

FLAC charges the DOJ with attempting to downplay a major scandal that harmed Milwaukee families, attempting a major cover-up to protect high level city officials, including former Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, and environmental racism for not aggressively coming forward and charging those responsible.

The DOJ is failing to protect our community from environmental racist policies that have harmed our community for years if not decades. City officials who have harmed our children, elected leaders who have harmed the people of our Milwaukee must be held accountable for their misconduct as workers and representatives of Milwaukee government.

The DOJ must give our community an update of the criminal investigation or release its findings so that FLAC can explore the need to request from the United States Attorney General review every aspect of this criminal investigation with our attorneys.