

Milwaukee County Supervisor Weishan: What the state of Wisconsin can do to help address violence in Milwaukee County

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MILWAUKEE - Last week a 14-year-old boy was shot and killed in a West Milwaukee alleyway. It was just [one of the eight homicides](#) committed in Milwaukee County in the first two weeks of 2022 according to the Medical Examiner's Office.

The boy, who was [described by friends](#) as someone who, "Always made sure everybody laughed and always made sure everyone had a good time," was a student in the West Allis West Milwaukee School District. As a product of West Milwaukee High School, it is unimaginable to me that something like this would happen in the community that I grew up in.

The violence happening in Milwaukee County is among the worst I have seen in my lifetime. People I have spoken to are scared to let their children leave their homes. We cannot accept this as the new normal, and all levels of government must be engaged in the effort to combat violence.

The State of Wisconsin can and must do more to help Milwaukee County and its municipalities address this crisis. Due to an [inequitable shared revenue system](#), Milwaukee County sends at least \$500 million more dollars each year to the State of Wisconsin than it did in 2009, but the amount of shared revenue sent back to Milwaukee County has either stayed flat or declined since 2010.

The City of Milwaukee has also seen a significant reduction in shared revenue from the state, with [one estimate](#) showing that the city would be receiving an additional

\$118.5 million annually if the city's 2003 share was adjusted for inflation and left as is.

These are dollars that could be used to make the courts work more efficient, fund vital services that address the root causes of violent crime and fund law enforcement.

The City of Milwaukee—where the majority of Milwaukee County homicides take place—is simply unable to fund the level of law enforcement needed to properly address this crisis on its own. Because of rising costs, the City of Milwaukee has had to [reduce its sworn strength](#) significantly over the last few years, even though the overall police budget has remained relatively steady. A boost in annual shared revenue payments from the state would go a long way to bring the Milwaukee Police Department back to full strength.

While crucial to reducing violence in our community, law enforcement is not the only solution needed. The State of Wisconsin needs to assist Milwaukee County with the funding needed to unclog our court system.

Chief Judge Mary Triggiano has [cited](#) shortages of deputy court clerks, court reporters, interpreters, and bailiffs in Milwaukee County. Regional Attorney Manager for the State Public Defender Tom Reed said about 270 cases were awaiting appointment of counsel as recently as November.

The State of Wisconsin should consider allocating federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to help attract the attorneys, clerks, and other positions needed to move these cases forward, sentence the convicted, and get the records of the innocent cleared.

Clearing cases will cut back on the revolving door of criminals being put back on the streets while awaiting trial. You can put 10,000 cops on the streets, but it will do very little if the courts are not working properly.

Finally, we must ensure that the vital services our neighbors rely on are fully funded. Milwaukee County provides essential services to the community such as housing, behavioral health, and transportation that address the root causes of violent crime.

This brings us back to the initial problem of our inequitable shared revenue system.

Each year during the budget process, instead of planning how we will invest funds for the betterment our community, we are forced to look for the cuts that will cause the least amount of harm. It does not need to be this way, and the State of Wisconsin could make changes that would allow Milwaukee County to invest in the services we know our county needs.

It is my hope that the State of Wisconsin will heed these calls for their cooperation in addressing the violence ravaging Milwaukee County. When Milwaukee County is prosperous, the entire state wins.