

Milwaukee County Exec Crowley: Introduces 2023 budget prioritizing investments in public health and safety, mental health, substance use, youth services, and parks

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MILWAUKEE, WI - This morning, County Executive David Crowley presented the 2023 Recommended Budget to the Milwaukee County Board and residents of Milwaukee County. The 2023 budget continues to advance the first County-wide strategic plan in two decades and reflects the organizational vision of achieving race and health equity.

“I’m proud to say that once again in the face of many obstacles, our budget makes no major cuts to services despite the current constraints on revenue. The 2023 Recommended Budget remains a reflection of our shared values and our organizational vision of achieving race and health equity,” said Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley. “This commitment is significant as the County continues to face an ongoing crisis on two fronts: systemic racism and the societal impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

The \$1.176 billion 2023 operating budget addresses acute needs with targeted investments in the County’s vision and strategic focus areas. Highlights of the budget include:

- Investing in Equity
 - \$21 million investment in Community Access to Recovery Services
 - Increasing funding for Credible Messengers by \$500,000 for a total of \$1.7

- million budget
 - Expands Children's Long-Term Support program budget to \$32.4 million
 - \$1.5 million increase in Parks Dept. funding, including 17 new full-time positions
- Bridging the Gap
 - Funding Center for Forensic Science and Protective Medicine, jointly with State of Wisconsin
 - Increasing programmatic funding for and renaming the House of Correction as the Community Reintegration Center; Creates 9 new positions in CRC to expand support in areas of psychiatric social work, community outreach, quality assurance, administration, and operations.
 - No major service cuts despite annual structural budget deficit
- Creating Intentional Inclusion
 - Increasing compensation and vacation days to improve recruitment and retention; adding funding to increase diversity in County government through recruitment
 - Reimagine Community Business Development Partners as the Office of Economic Inclusion
 - Creates two more positions in Office of Equity to increase County's presence and visibility in hard-to-reach communities

"Thanks to the hard work and sacrifice of our County departments, we've passed a budget with no cuts to services. However, we couldn't put this budget together without making some tough decisions," **continued Crowley**. "This budget is grounded in the financial realities we face and makes small scale program reductions to help close deficits and protect the continuation of critical services in 2023. These were tough decisions for us to make, but it is indicative of the many tough decisions that may lie ahead if a new revenue stream is not introduced to close our annual structural deficit. "

After years of reduced correctional placements, the numbers are climbing due to state-mandated court orders. Currently, it is costing Milwaukee County a staggering \$1,178 a day or \$430,000 per year to house our youth in the state facilities. Along with an increased number of youth being ordered to State corrections, the number of youth within the Detention Center at the Vel Phillips Youth and Family Justice Center is also growing.

The budgetary impact due to the increased census both at the State facilities of

Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake Schools and Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center as well as locally at Vel Phillips has necessitated a \$2 million reduction to community-based investment to achieve a balanced budget.

In addition, Milwaukee County Transit Services is facing a 2025 fiscal cliff. The budget decreases the frequency of buses by an average of approximately 8 minutes on routes 52, 92, 34 and 88 to avoid eliminating routes all together.

[Milwaukee County continues to be leader in the MoveForwardMKE coalition, a partnership between the business community, state legislators, municipal governments, and community groups, to advocate at the state level for a local option sales tax increase to decrease property taxes, address legacy costs, and preserve critical local services.](#) Even with a 1 percent increase in the sales tax, the County would maintain one of the lowest sales taxes in the nation for a community our size and generate \$180 million in additional revenue - matching the scale of the problem at the lowest cost to taxpayers with no budgetary impacts on the state budget.

“Given the persistent challenges we faced this year and the financial constraints facing the County, I’m pleased to recommend a budget that builds on the victories in equity we’ve achieved so far and addresses acute community needs,” concluded Crowley.