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County Exec. Crowley: Invests nearly $2 million in federal dollars to improve access to mental health services and connect residents to good paying jobs

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MILWAUKEE, WI – In its third meeting of the year, the Milwaukee County Board voted to invest almost $2 million in combined ARPA investments targeted to support youth mental health needs and extending the FlexRide pilot program. The additional funds come on the heels of bill signings held earlier this year unlocking millions aimed at addressing the opioid epidemic and affordable housing in Milwaukee County suburbs.

“Kudos goes out to the members of the ARPA taskforce and the Milwaukee County Board for continuing to make smart investments with our remaining federal pandemic relief funds that meet community needs,” **said County Executive David Crowley.** “As an organization, we’ve used the one-time federal funding in smart ways to keep residents in their homes, address the behavioral health needs exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic, and identify projects that generate additional revenue or bring down long-term costs for the County. Investing additional funds to get residents back to work and support much needed mental health services for area youth continues a streak of smart investments that help advance our overall strategic plan to achieve race and health equity.”

In March, the County Board approved allocating just over $200,000 to Walker’s Point Youth and Family Center to implement two new licensed professional counselor (LPC) positions: a bilingual LPC and a LPC focused on LGBTQIA

programming. In addition, the resolution allocates $408,000 to support a contract with City on a Hill to expand responsive behavioral health services. The funds are expected to receive approval by the Mental Health Board.

$1.3 million in ARPA funds to support and expand the FlexRide Milwaukee pilot program. The FlexRide pilot program launched in March of 2022 under the collaboration of UW-Milwaukee and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission.

The goal of FlexRide is to help Milwaukee County residents who lack reliable transportation obtain or seek employment in outlying areas. Over the past year, the program has helped area workers reach employment opportunities in Menomonee Falls and Butler, the expanded program will include Oak Creek, Franklin, and New Berlin beginning this spring.

Over the past year, FlexRide delivered more than 16,000 rides. The FlexRide expansion will offer more coverage areas, including pickups on Milwaukee’s South Side and connections with childcare centers. It will also feature 24-hour service Monday-Friday.