

MILWAUKEE COUNTY EXECUTIVE CANDIDATE FORUM

JANUARY 14, 2020



FORUM SPONSORS

- Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition
- Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force
- Co-sponsor MIRACLE Network
- Thanks to Independence**First** for hosting

CHECK OUT VOTER REGISTRATION & RESOURCES

Thanks to:

- Volunteers from League of Women Voters of Milwaukee County
- Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition
- **Remember to vote in the Spring Primary February 18!**
- Check your voter registration, view your ballot, request an absentee ballot at:
MyVote.wi.gov

THANK YOU TO THE PARTICIPATING CANDIDATES

- State Representative David Crowley
- Glendale Mayor Bryan Kennedy
- State Senator Chris Larson
- Milwaukee County Board Chairman Theo Lipscomb
- Jim Sullivan, Director, Milwaukee County Child Support Services

PANEL OF COMMUNITY ADVOCATES

- Phillip Corona, Independence**First**
- Shirley Drake, Wisconsin Community Services/ BHD Office of Consumer Affairs
- Martina Gollin Graves, Mental Health American of Wisconsin
- Patricia Obletz, Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force
- Wendy Weckler, Hope House

FORMAT FOR CANDIDATE FORUM

- Candidates received in advance a background document with sample questions.
- The sample questions and background are in this powerpoint and will be displayed.
- Our facilitator will moderate the process. We will rotate the order in which candidates respond.
- Panel members will ask **shorter** versions of the questions provided in advance. The longer question is displayed for background.
- Time for responses will be either 1 or 2 minutes as stated by the facilitator. Our timers will hold up cards.

COUNTY FISCAL CHALLENGES

Milwaukee County continues to face significant fiscal challenges and increasing needs in the community, and insufficient state funding. The Fair Deal faces strong oppositions from the legislative majority in Madison.

- What is your plan to produce a balanced budget and also meet emerging needs:
- To what extent will service cuts be part of your strategy?
- How will you work to change opposition to the Fair Deal and win support?

TRANSIT/PARATRANSIT

Availability of accessible, affordable transportation is important to determining how independent older adults and people with disabilities can be. Milwaukee County has significant responsibility for transit and paratransit services.

- What is your plan to sustain and improve the MCTS system, both Paratransit and fixed route?
- Cross-county bus transportation is very limited, and it is non-existent for paratransit riders. What is your plan to increase access to transportation across the county line?

MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE - COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Mental Health Task Force has supported expansion of community-based services, such as psychosocial rehabilitation, peer support services, supported housing, mobile crisis, supported employment, and children's wraparound services. This is consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act's "integration mandate" and the Supreme Court's *Olmstead* decision, as well as with good practice. Expansion of community services will ultimately reduce incarceration and psychiatric hospital admissions, decreasing the need for emergency services and acute inpatient care.

- What challenges remain, and what investments will you make to increase access and capacity of community based care?
- What can Milwaukee County do to support prevention and expand access to community and home based services resources for youth and families, to better support our youth and prevent involvement with child welfare and youth justice systems?



INPATIENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Milwaukee County is transitioning from operating an inpatient psychiatric hospital to purchasing inpatient services for adults and children. This will include funding inpatient services for people who are uninsured, underinsured, indigent and for some individuals experiencing an emergency detention.

- What action should Milwaukee County to ensure a smooth and safe transition of care with the private hospitals serving county funded patients?
- What should Milwaukee County do to ensure quality of care for patients funded by Milwaukee County, including coordination with county administered community services, and access to advocacy and legal services for involuntary patients?

MENTAL HEALTH BOARD

2013 Wisconsin Act 203 established a Milwaukee County Mental Health Board. The intent was to establish a board of experts with the responsibility to advance a community-based, recovery-oriented system that prioritizes access to community-based services, reduces reliance on institutional and inpatient care, provides early intervention, diverts people from the corrections system, and maximizes use of mobile crisis and crisis intervention training.

- What is your assessment of the Mental Health Board to date and what is your view of the Board's role moving forward, including their budget authority?
- If elected, would you propose changes to Act 203? If yes, what changes?

JUVENILE JUSTICE

The majority of youth in Wisconsin's juvenile correctional facilities are from Milwaukee and are Black. According to the most recently available data (2013), Black youth comprise only 10 percent of the overall youth population in Milwaukee but 92 percent of those incarcerated. The majority of youth in Wisconsin's juvenile correctional facilities have a mental health or cognitive disability, and a high percentage have special education needs.

- Do you support returning Milwaukee area youth placed at Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake to Milwaukee County?
- What action should our County take to improve services for these young people by ensuring that special education needs are addressed and emotional and behavioral supports are provided?



CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

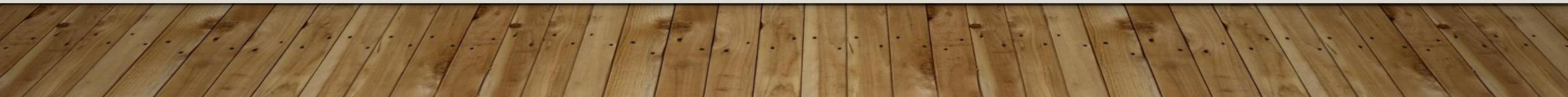
- Far too many people with mental illnesses are in jails and prisons – a majority of those in prison and jail have a history of mental illness and/or substance abuse. A significant number of those at the Milwaukee County Jail and House of Corrections (HOC) have severe mental illness, and local law enforcement continue to ask for more community resources to support diversion.

The Christensen Decree resulted from a lawsuit filed in 1996 regarding concerns about overcrowding and poor medical and mental health care at the Milwaukee County Jail and HOC. The Decree has required an outside monitor to provide additional oversight for medical and mental health care at the Jail and HOC.

- What commitment will you make to sustain the funding for diversion programs?
 - What actions can Milwaukee County take now to reduce incarceration, divert people with mental illness and substance abuse needs from the criminal justice system and connect them to community mental health/ substance abuse services and housing?
 - What actions should be taken to ensure humane treatment at the Jail and HOC and support continuity of care and connection with community providers for those with a mental illness or other disabilities or complex health needs?
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HOUSING

Milwaukee County has an urgent need for safe, affordable, accessible housing for persons with mental illness and other disabilities, as well as for other low income people. The lack of such housing contributes to housing insecurity, eviction, and homelessness. The County has played an active role in addressing these needs through the Housing Division and as a member of the Continuum of Care.

- What is your plan to increase access to accessible affordable housing?
 - Milwaukee County has utilized *Housing First*, a best practice model that aims to rapidly re-house people with mental health and substance use disorders. What will do to support Housing First efforts? What action should the County take to assist those who are homeless, but do not fit the definition of Chronically Homeless?
 - What commitments will you make in the next budget to support services for our community members who are experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity?
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DISABILITY SERVICES/ CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

- Access to early diagnosis, and to community based services and supports (therapies, assistive technology, respite) can ensure that children and youth with disabilities reach their full potential and development. Milwaukee County administers the Children's Long Term Care Waiver program, which provides supports to children with disabilities and their families, so they can remain in the community. Currently the number of Milwaukee children served by the program is relatively small and there is potential for many more children to benefit. As of August 2019, Dane County had 1016 children enrolled and 150 on a wait list; Milwaukee County had 949 enrolled and no wait list.
- What actions will you take as County Executive to expand outreach to underserved families, strengthen service delivery, and ensure more children and families are helped?

ACCESSIBILITY

- Many county-owned land and facilities have accessibility barriers which limit opportunities for many people with disabilities and older adults to use facilities and parks. The pace of improvements to the facilities have been limited by budget difficulties. A particular egregious example is that aging and disability services, and Income Maintenance are housed at the Coggs Building which has a multitude of accessibility issues
- How will the County work under your leadership to remove the ADA barriers in county-owned properties and facilities, and how will you address these needs in the budget?
- Will you make a commitment to move services including Disability Services, the Department of Aging, and Income Maintenance to an accessible location?



AGING

The baby boomer generation is coming of age, and the number of seniors in our community continues to increase. The number of people with Alzheimer's is growing dramatically, and strikes disproportionately in African American and Hispanic families.

- What do you see as the top three challenges for our senior citizens that Milwaukee County can help to address?
- How would you sustain and increase the capacity of our senior centers for services and meal programs?

RACIAL DISPARITIES

Metropolitan Milwaukee is one of the most economically and racially segregated areas in the U.S. and older adults and people with disabilities of color, as well as non-English speakers, often face a lack of access to needed services, healthy food, and good quality health care. Despite the higher rates of chronic illness, health disparities and preventable deaths in lower socioeconomic neighborhoods, funding for African American and other culturally specific neighborhood programs continues to lag behind.

- What is your commitment to ensuring that County Services are accessible to all, and that racial, cultural and economic barriers are removed?
- How can the office of the County Executive eliminate the racial divide in Milwaukee?

NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

- According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [1 in 4 adults in the US](#) has a disability, including impairments with vision, hearing, mobility, and cognition. A guiding principle of the disability rights movement is “Nothing about us without us” meaning that people with disabilities must be included in policy decisions that impact their lives and independence. Or to put it another way, if you not at the table, you are on the menu.
- As County Executive, how will you ensure that you include the perspective and voice of people with disabilities and disability advocates in policy and budget decisions?
- Will you make a commitment to participate in our annual briefing on the county budget?

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WISCONSIN DISABILITY VOTE COALITION

- Our voting fact sheets and videos are available at: <https://disabilityvote.org/>
- Like us and follow us on Facebook
- For help with disability related voting questions, help filing a complaint, or other voting concerns, call the Disability Rights Wisconsin Voter Hotline:

844-DIS-VOTE/ 844-347-8683