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ROBERT G. DONOVAN

ALDERMAN, 8TH DISTRICT

November 8, 2019

The Honorable,
Mr. Chris Abele
Milwaukee County Executive
c/o Milwaukee County Courthouse, Room 306
901 N. 9th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53233

Dear Mr. Abele:

Let me first thank you for your service to the residents of Milwaukee County. I have always believed public service to be a noble calling, the rewards for which come from unlooked-for places; I trust you will receive them. I sincerely hope that you and your family are able to take time away from center stage and that you will return soon to serve, perhaps in other ways.

As I, too, prepare to leave office in April 2020, I wanted to take a moment to ask you to think in a way that only someone not running for re-election can about the future of the institution you have served. For all the challenges faced by the City of Milwaukee, and they are legion, I believe those facing Milwaukee County are greater and certainly far more immediate. There are few institutions that could endure a deferred capital burden estimated to be approaching \$1 billion. I cannot imagine the pressure of trying to replace or renovate a criminal justice facility that will likely have a price tag north of \$300 million alone.

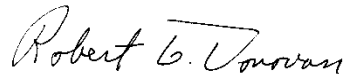
Beneath these hard numbers, though, I have long wondered about the less-visible costs of having both our 19 municipalities and the County provide services to our residents. Public safety, infrastructure maintenance, procurement, social welfare, public sanitation and health are all areas of overlap if not outright duplication. I know portions of the County have taken tentative steps towards consolidation, but even fairly obvious things like combined public safety dispatch have met with an opposition that I think is no longer affordable. To be direct, there are times when I feel we are taxing our citizens for a system of government shaped and informed by

the Eisenhower era. As much as I continue to like Ike, it is time to seek other options.

I would, therefore, urge you to reach out to some third party – perhaps the Public Policy Forum, but perhaps another – and commission it to study and then propose alternative structures for municipal government in Milwaukee County and for Milwaukee County itself. I would hope this investigation would be an open-minded one, perhaps not resulting in one solution but many. And I hope it would be bold, considering everything from metropolitan forms of governance to the devolution of Milwaukee County to its constituent municipalities. Nothing should be off the table. The present circumstances are far too urgent.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter. Should you have questions of me, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Respectfully,



Ald. Robert G. Donovan
Chair, Public Safety and Health Committee