

2025 State of the County Address
Prepared for Delivery

Thank you for joining us today for the 2025 State of the County Address.

There are so many leaders, partners, allies, and residents in attendance this morning. I appreciate you being here. Your leadership and partnership remain invaluable, and I look forward to what we will do together.

To start, I want to express my gratitude for a number of folks.

I want to say thank you to the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office and Milwaukee County Fire Department for leading the Color Guard today.

Thank you to the amazing Cream City Chorale for lifting up our spirits.

And thank you to one of our Milwaukee County Changemakers, Dan Terrio, for delivering a compelling land acknowledgement that signifies Milwaukee County's respect for Wisconsin's Tribal communities, including Forest County Potawatomi that is represented today by Chairman James Crawford.

And also, thank you to our Milwaukee County Youth Commission co-chairs for bringing the energy this morning, as well as to your dedicated advisors, Supervisor Kathleen Vincent and City of Milwaukee Alderwoman Sharlen Moore.

Last but certainly not least, thank you to Peggy Williams-Smith for that wonderful introduction.

Peggy and her team at Visit Milwaukee are outstanding partners in bringing more exciting tourism activity to our community and creating opportunities for working families.

They are helping share our story in Wisconsin and around the nation, as well as capitalize on major opportunities like the upcoming NFL Draft in Green Bay.

But Visit Milwaukee also works alongside my administration to uplift businesses, non-profits, and the local leaders who make our community special and unique.

Where fresh ideas can ignite us...

Where bold flavors can inspire us...

And where we can move forward together.

Let's give Peggy and her team a round of applause for everything they do for Milwaukee!

Visit Milwaukee is one of the various partners who created the Milwaukee Theater District.

And one of the driving catalysts of this district is the Marcus Performing Arts Center, where we are gathered today.

This location has become a destination hub for culture and creativity since its inception in 1969.

It's fitting that we are here today, as Milwaukee County has had a long-established relationship with the Marcus Center.

That's because promoting and preserving the arts is important for the future of our children.

And the Marcus Center is working to ensure that families and kids from all around Wisconsin can come here for Broadway plays, community events, and so much more.

In fact, my family and I recently attended the touring production of *Elf* last year. And yes, we had a blast!

I want to thank Marcus Center President and CEO Kevin Giglinto, alongside his entire team, for graciously opening their doors to us this morning. Let's show them our appreciation!

Two years ago, I delivered my State of the County address at UW-Milwaukee, an institution I'm now proud to call my alma mater.

During that time, we were in a very different environment than we find ourselves in now.

Milwaukee County was bouncing back from a global pandemic.

We were focused on turning the page, from combating a public health crisis to charting a new beginning for our entire community.

And during that address at UWM, I spoke about the important role partnerships play in delivering progress and opportunities to Milwaukee residents.

I'm pleased to report that by working together, we've realized significant results since that time.

With that in mind, I often find myself thinking about the amount of collaboration that has gone into building up Milwaukee County.

Leaders who are no longer with us – like Vel R. Phillips, Senator Herb Kohl, Dr. James Cameron, Dr. Michael Lovell, and so many others – who devoted their lives to building bridges and making our communities stronger by working with others.

My friend, Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson, often references the power of relationships and partnerships. I couldn't agree more.

Because now more than ever, partnerships and collaboration are the way forward.

And I am proud we are witnessing the results of our partnership-centered approach.

From “A” to “Z” – meaning from the Airport to the Zoo – we are creating opportunities and growth for workers and families alike.

At Mitchell International Airport, we just broke ground on a new state-of-the-art air cargo facility made possible through a public-private partnership that is delivering for our community.

Now, this major development will create jobs and support our regional economy – all at zero cost to local taxpayers.

That’s what I call a win-win-win. And at our hometown airport, the momentum doesn’t stop there.

By working with partners across multiple sectors, like the Wisconsin Center District, MMAC, Milwaukee Tool, the GMC, and our unions, we are pursuing the development of a revitalized international terminal that will generate economic activity across our entire region.

Mitchell Airport is also adding and expanding flight options around the world by strengthening its relationships with new and existing airline partners.

This allows us to improve MKE’s world-class operations, which led to another increase in total traffic in 2024, with more than six million passengers traveling through our airport to experience all the great things Milwaukee County has to offer.

Which brings me to the Milwaukee County Zoo, where a revitalized habitat for our Humboldt Penguins now welcomes visitors as they enter the grounds, thanks to the support of folks like Supervisor Patti Logsdon.

And construction on the new Adventure Africa Rhino Exhibit is on schedule and slated to open up later this year.

And in the coming weeks, my administration will outline our vision for the Milwaukee County Zoo, including a strategic plan that will detail future projects to engage and educate Wisconsin families for many years to come.

Following the release of that plan, we will begin working with the Zoological Society and all of our animal-loving partners to pursue these projects in the long-term.

And that’s not all. Across the county, several new facilities are set to open their doors soon that I’m really excited to highlight for you today.

Simply put, Milwaukee County is putting cranes in the sky and workers on the ground to build up our community.

As you know, much of our work in recent years has focused on utilizing our real estate assets to drive investments and job growth, including right next door to us at the home of the Milwaukee Bucks and Deer District, which once stood the Park East Freeway.

And since 2020, we've been successful in this space, with almost \$120 million in private investments creating nearly 3,000 jobs.

Milwaukee County is also committed to supporting small businesses throughout our community, and I call on our Economic Development Division to build bridges between small businesses, entrepreneurs, local organizations, and municipalities seeking to fill commercial corridor spaces.

Because in partnership, we can fuel local economic development.

And when it comes down to economic development, we uphold the County's strategic plan by fostering sustainable economic growth for a more vibrant Milwaukee County. We will continue that work in the years ahead.

And my administration remains committed to becoming the healthiest county in the State of Wisconsin.

There are many avenues we are pursuing to achieve this very ambitious goal.

Just look at our No Wrong Door approach that is delivering results and improving health outcomes for our residents.

By integrating service areas, programs, and connections to care in DHHS, we are removing barriers to access and providing improved care for people.

My administration is constantly making improvements to our No Wrong Door model of service to make it easy for residents and families to know exactly where and how to access the services they absolutely need.

The No Wrong Door approach will soon have a new home at the Marcia P. Coggs Health and Human Services Center that is slated to open later this year.

For the first time in Milwaukee County history's, DHHS will have a building designed specifically to deliver health and human services.

I'm looking forward to joining the Coggs family, including Supervisor Priscilla Coggs-Jones, alongside the entire community for the grand opening on June 13th!

And I hope to see you all there as well.

Many divisions of DHHS will soon be headquartered at the new health and human services center, including our Veterans Services team who continue to serve our veterans and their families.

Veterans bravely served and sacrificed for our country and are now active, integral members of our community.

And I am proud we are steadfast partners to our veterans.

But at a time when we're witnessing unprecedented cuts to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs – which people are feeling locally at Zablocki VA Medical Center – our responsibility to do right by them is more important now than ever.

I don't believe that baselessly firing employees at Zablocki does any good for the health and wellbeing of Milwaukee County veterans and their families.

And I want anyone, especially our veterans, to contact my office if they are impacted by the decisions from officials in Washington, D.C.

Because we will always stand with the heroes who served and sacrificed to protect the freedoms that we so cherish.

Partnerships are also delivering results for our seniors and older adults.

In Milwaukee County, the population of older adults is growing.

We will soon have the most diverse group of aging residents that our region has ever seen.

That's why I've worked to meet the needs of our aging residents by providing funding for senior center programming, nutrition initiatives, and elder abuse prevention.

In June, I signed legislation adding new positions to the Milwaukee County Aging & Disability Resource Center to expand services.

Governor Tony Evers recently awarded us nearly \$4 million in grant funding for the renovation of the Clinton & Bernice Rose Senior Center.

Milwaukee County was also named a member of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities, becoming the first county in the Badger State to earn this designation.

And just last month, we celebrated the news that our senior centers will now have blood pressure monitors, so older adults throughout the community can stay healthy, thanks to a partnership with the American Heart Association.

I am grateful for our Aging Services team and the Commission on Aging for working on behalf of our seniors and older adults – led by community leader Jan Wilberg, along with County Supervisor and recently-elected State Representative, Sequanna Taylor.

Mental health partnerships remain a top priority for us, as we work collaboratively to expand access to care and ensure all residents have the resources they need.

We continue to witness the results of the Mental Health Emergency Center, which in 2024, served thousands of individuals experiencing a mental health or substance use disorder related crisis.

This is another first-of-its-kind public-private partnership with our regional health systems that is saving taxpayers money, thanks to a collaboration with Advocate Aurora, Ascension, Children's Wisconsin, and Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin.

Our Mental Health Navigator Program, created in collaboration with the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership, continues to provide supportive services for people experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis.

But as Supervisor Deanna Alexander would agree, we must continue strengthening these partnerships to ensure that folks can receive the care they need.

For years, local leaders and organizations across our community have been on the frontlines of the opioid crisis.

And I'm proud that we're seeing the positive impacts of strong partnerships and accessible resources.

While 2024 numbers are still being finalized, the data on our newly released Overdose Dashboard show that we are on track to have a 30% decline in opioid overdose deaths compared to 2023.

Now, the data alone doesn't tell us if this decline is due to fewer people overdosing or greater access to harm reduction supplies, such as naloxone.

But what it does tell us is that fewer people are dying of overdose in Milwaukee County. And that means more opportunities for treatment, recovery, and a path forward.

Because here's the thing: A decline in overdose deaths is just the start – we need to maintain this progress and continue fighting.

That's why we will continue investing in harm reduction programs and resources, so no other families have to experience the devastating grief of losing a loved one to overdose.

To date, Milwaukee County has successfully recovered the largest amount of opioid litigation settlements by any local government in the history of Wisconsin.

The settlement funds have been used to support a wide range of approaches in reducing fatal overdoses.

Here's another example: Last year, I joined our boots-on-the-ground Overdose Prevention Team to canvass homes on 27th and Capitol, a neighborhood that experiences one of the highest rates of overdose cases in the county.

We handed out free harm reduction tools and provided education about addiction and recovery services, with the goal of building trust and helping our neighbors understand that a better path forward is possible.

I want to thank Ricky Person and his team at DHHS for leading this effort that is making a difference for our community. Let's give them a round of applause!

Every life saved is a victory for all of us in Milwaukee County.

Across our three behavioral health access clinics, we served over 1,100 individuals in 2024 – and that's a 19% increase from the previous year.

The Better Ways to Cope movement continues to expand and develop new partnerships. We have now awarded funding to more than 20 community-based programs that are working with us to combat this crisis.

And our Harm Reduction Vending Machines are popping up at more locations across Milwaukee County, providing accessible, free resources directly to community members.

But even as we're witnessing a decline in overdose deaths, there's still more we can do to create healthier outcomes for our neighbors and loved ones.

By working in collaboration with the Medical College of Wisconsin and Versiti Blood Bank, the Milwaukee County Office of Emergency Management EMS Division is now administering whole blood transfusions in the field for critically injured trauma patients.

Maintaining a history of advancing the practice of prehospital care, Milwaukee County's EMS system is the first in Wisconsin and one of the first fire-based EMS systems in the nation to offer this new care in the field.

Previously, patients would have to wait until they reached the hospital to receive a blood transfusion, but now our EMS teams can more than double their odds of survival.

This initiative is literally the difference between life and death.

In fact, just last week, first responders from the Milwaukee Fire Department administered their first whole blood transfusion in the field for a patient who had experienced significant blood loss.

Thanks to this new initiative and the quick actions from the paramedics of MED2, the patient is expected to make a full recovery.

It is a testament to our commitment to pioneering improvements in emergency care, empowering our first responders, and, most importantly, saving lives.

I am grateful to Milwaukee County OEM and Dr. Ben Weston for bringing this initiative to fruition and providing the resources, training, and logistics for the municipal EMS departments.

Soon, this life-saving work will have a new home at the Forensic Science and Protective Medicine Facility in Wauwatosa.

This facility is the result of a significant collaboration with the State of Wisconsin and our health system partners to create a desperately needed space for the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner and to enhance the operations of the Office of Emergency Management.

Strengthening public safety partnerships will remain a priority in our community.

To do that, we are utilizing a comprehensive approach to address the root causes of community violence.

Milwaukee County has made significant investments in the collective impact of community violence intervention work with our partners.

My administration is supporting efforts like the Credible Messengers Program that works with youth involved in the justice system.

This initiative is entirely powered by our partners—community-based organizations, public health entities, academic institutions, and government agencies.

Since its inception, this innovative approach has made significant strides in improving public safety and supporting Milwaukee County youth – who are either involved in the justice system or have been referred by community partners – through mentorship, resources, and job opportunities.

And the data speaks for itself. Outcomes have shown that 78% of those served had no new offenses while involved with the program.

The outcomes were even higher for non-justice involved youth. 87% of these participants have no new offenses or system involvement.

By focusing our efforts upstream, we're not only preventing our young people from entering the criminal justice system but also putting them on a path to success.

Also, last year, we also launched the Advance Peace Model.

This investment is identifying solutions to decrease gun violence that will help ensure Milwaukee County is a safe and healthy community where families and children can thrive.

In cities across the country, the Advance Peace Model has seen proven outcomes in reducing gun violence.

I look forward to witnessing those positive results here in Milwaukee County. We're going to keep working with our partners to end the epidemic of gun violence – because lives depend on it.

Looking ahead, the most important investment in our public safety continuum will be the removal and replacement of the Public Safety Building.

Built nearly 100 years ago, the Milwaukee County Public Safety Building is crumbling, inefficient, and poses significant risks to community safety and justice.

It must be removed and replaced with a new building that will house all criminal courts and other related functions.

The layout of hallways, the courtrooms, and other spaces in the Public Safety Building and throughout the Courthouse Complex currently impact justice and exacerbate public safety challenges.

Victims, defendants, jurors, family members, visitors and staff all share the same elevators and hallways.

These shared spaces lead to security incidents and mistrials.

This is why we must pursue this generational investment to improve outcomes for all impacted by the justice system, address significant safety concerns, and preserve the continuity of court operations.

But strong partnerships will be key, because nearly 80% of Milwaukee County's property tax levy is already dedicated to state-mandated services.

That is why State investment is needed to help protect our taxpayers and help protect our resources – especially for mandated services.

And look, we know that when our partners in Madison deliver public safety investments for Milwaukee County, we deliver results. We've done it before, and we can do it again.

With that in mind, I want to thank Governor Tony Evers for recognizing the importance of this issue by proposing \$25 million in his capital budget for this crucial project.

And I look forward to continued collaboration with the Governor and members of the State Legislature to address the critical public safety needs in Milwaukee County for the benefit of our entire region and state.

I also want to say thank you to our newly elected District Attorney, Kent Lovern, as well as Sheriff Denita Ball, Chief Judge Carl Ashley, Clerk of Circuit Court Anna Maria Hodges, Supervisor Steve Taylor, and so many others for working with us to get this project done.

Public safety investments like this also matter to the people who are working within the system to create better outcomes for our residents.

This past January at the Community Reintegration Center – formerly known as the House of Correction – Correctional Officer Monica Purifoy was monitoring a dorm as residents were wrapping up their day.

Officer Purifoy saw a resident collapse and slump to the floor. Immediately, Officer Purifoy checked for a pulse, but there wasn't one.

The unconscious resident began showing signs of extreme distress.

Per her training, Officer Purifoy called for help and began to perform chest compressions.

Another correctional officer, Damantie Bailey, heard the sense of urgency communicated in the call for help and took over chest compressions.

Eventually, the resident started to breathe and was successfully stabilized.

But it was in that moment, these well-trained officers demonstrated the core values of competency, humanity, and security as they applied their training to a real-life medical emergency.

Officers Purifoy and Bailey are here today, and I want to recognize them for their life-saving work. Let's show them our appreciation.

But we all know that at the heart of a safe, healthy community is access to quality, affordable housing.

That's why by working with partners like Supervisor Shawn Rolland, we've made the development of affordable housing a priority of my administration.

Since being elected as County Executive, we have invested over \$45 million towards the development of affordable housing, particularly in our suburbs.

We currently have projects in seven different municipalities, including in ones that have never seen initiatives like this before.

These projects range from developments that support our unsheltered homeless residents all the way to homeownership.

And here are a couple examples.

We are wrapping up the development of 100 brand new homes for first-time homeowners in the King Park neighborhood with Habitat for Humanity and the Emem Group.

We are developing the County's first ever affordable subdivision for homeownership in Oak Creek.

And in Franklin, we are deploying federal funds to support an affordable housing development for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

This is why we focus on housing: Because it leads to a foundation that families need in order to focus on the quality of life issues that they face.

And I want to acknowledge our suburban municipal partners, including Oak Creek Mayor Daniel Bukiewicz, Franklin Mayor John Nelson, and many others who are stepping up, speaking out, and supporting these critical investments.

The buy-in from our local leaders is extremely important in getting these projects across the finish line.

What isn't discussed enough is that affordable housing is an important part of economic development in these communities.

Because of our investments, more than \$27 million of property tax revenue will be generated, not to mention the creation of family supporting jobs.

But my call-to-action is this: We want more partners to help us build on our progress. We've realized great results by collaborating with organizations like Acts Housing.

I want more folks join us in this work, because it's *working*.

And looking ahead, I will continue doing everything I can to build the necessary partnerships to ensure every resident and family can access the housing they need.

On a similar note, Milwaukee County continues leading the way nationally with our response to homelessness.

In 2024, Milwaukee County again had the lowest unsheltered homelessness count per capita in the United States.

And we are expecting this progress to continue in the year ahead.

Simply put, we're doing this work differently, and it's bucking national trends.

In total, our Housing First approach has saved Milwaukee County taxpayers over \$30 million since its implementation.

And this year, we'll be making our case to Congress to ensure that permanent housing and supportive services remain the focus of national policies.

Given our current fiscal condition, as well as looming cuts at the federal level, maintaining this progress is going to be difficult.

That's why I am truly grateful for the leadership and partnership of United States Senator Tammy Baldwin and Congresswoman Gwen Moore for supporting our local and regional housing efforts.

I also want to shout-out Continuum of Care partners like the City of Milwaukee, the Downtown Business Improvement District, the United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties, and so many others for collaborating with us to help folks access the housing they need.

But we simply need more resources to keep this important work going, including from the business and philanthropic communities.

Greater partnerships will support the work that our Housing First and Homeless Outreach Teams are carrying out on a daily basis.

I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge these dedicated employees. This is not easy work, and I'm grateful for everyone who is working with us to end chronic homelessness in Milwaukee County.

But look, when we invest in housing, we are investing in workers and families. We're investing in businesses and neighborhoods. Our investments in public transit are doing this as well.

This year, the Milwaukee County Transit System is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

Mass transit in Milwaukee County grew from a two-person horse and carriage in the 1800s to electric buses today.

In 1975, Milwaukee County embraced public transit when it began operating bus service through the newly named Milwaukee County Transit System.

And now for five decades, MCTS has been providing essential public transit services across our community, connecting residents with jobs, health services, and recreational activity.

Throughout this year, we will be recognizing the importance of public transit.

That's because investing in public transit is good for our workers and families in Milwaukee County.

This year, MCTS will implement a new strategic plan aimed at improving customer service, deepening community partnerships, strengthening collaboration, and securing MCTS' financial future.

We will soon welcome the addition of 30 new buses arriving in 2025 with modern features that will enhance the rider experience.

And following the County's largest investment in public transit safety, the MCTS in-house public safety department is already earning positive feedback from bus operators, passengers, and local law enforcement for enhancing community safety.

One of those bus operators, Keyon Finkley, demonstrated *MCTS Excellence* on a cold day when he noticed a small child running into the road on Capitol Drive.

The young boy was barefoot, wearing only a pajama shirt. Keyon knew the temperature was only in the 30s.

He quickly stopped the bus and sprinted toward the little boy, saving him from running into oncoming traffic.

While waiting for help to arrive, Keyon stayed with the child, giving him a warm place to rest.

And I'm happy to share that, thanks to Keyon, the boy was safely reunited with his family.

This demonstrates one of the many ways our MCTS bus operators consistently step up and help children, families, and community members in danger or distress.

Keyon is here with us today and I have one thing to say, from the bottom of my heart: thank you.

Situations like the one I just described are exactly why our streets and roadways need to be as safe as possible.

Motor vehicle collisions are one of the leading causes of death and disability in this county, and we see the tragic outcomes every day in Milwaukee.

While overall car crashes in our county have declined 14% since 2019, fatal collisions have actually increased by 34%.

This means the crashes that are occurring are more severe, more deadly, and more devastating to our community.

But we need to remember that behind every statistic is a person.

A mother, a child, a friend, or a neighbor whose life was cut short.

The community they leave behind is forever changed by a preventable crash.

That's why enhancing the safety of our roads remains one of the most important issues facing the health, wellbeing, and economic vitality of our community.

Collaboration and partnerships are key to reducing speeding on our roadways and combating reckless driving.

For the first time and thanks to the support of partners like Supervisor Steven Shea, Milwaukee County and our 19 municipalities will implement a unified strategy to address high-risk roadways, eliminate traffic deaths and injuries, and improve the health and safety of our entire population.

We also just unveiled the latest phase of the Motor Vehicle Collision Dashboard to help make policy decisions that will have the largest tangible impact on the community.

In phase one, we collected the data and made it publicly accessible.

Now with phase two, we will tell the story of what this data really means for our residents.

Everybody has a part to play as we work to address reckless driving and move toward Vision Zero, which is our goal of zero deaths and zero serious injuries on Milwaukee roads.

We need all of us, together, working to save lives.

Just like our roadways, investments in accessible green spaces are good for our economy, our health, and our quality of life.

That is why Milwaukee County Parks are the beating heart of our community.

In 2024, we celebrated the grand openings and groundbreakings of several projects in our parks – many of which were made possible through partnerships with the Milwaukee Parks Foundation and our parks friends groups.

By working with partners like Supervisor Sheldon Wasserman, we are directing additional resources for park operations that will support increased recreational activity and help generate revenue for programming.

We're also pursuing new capital projects across the parks system, including the next phase of the South Shore Breakwater project, renovations to the Underwood Creek Parkway in Wauwatosa, and more.

In addition, Milwaukee County Parks is advancing our goal of adding 10 miles of new trails to serve all community members while minimizing the impact on natural resources.

But as Supervisors Willie Johnson and Felicia Martin would note, investments at Milwaukee County Parks can also produce career pathways and job training opportunities in the trades for young people like Justin Rodriguez.

Justin participated in our Lighting Jobs Program last year, where local youth were trained to install energy efficiency enhancements at our facilities.

I met Justin at the Mary Ryan Boys & Girls Club in Sherman Park to see firsthand the skills he was learning through this program.

Following his recent graduation from Bradley Tech High School, Justin received a fulltime job at ALLCON, a Hispanic, female-owned contracting firm.

Justin is here with us today. Can you all please join me in giving him a huge congratulations?

The clean energy industry that Justin is working in remains extremely important as we continue addressing the impacts of climate change.

That's why today, I am announcing the completion of my administration's Climate Action Plan, a new roadmap that is aimed at achieving net-zero carbon emissions in Milwaukee County operations by the year 2050.

The Climate Action Plan will deploy policies and procedures to reduce emissions and support job creation efforts, neighborhood well-being, and more.

Progress has already been realized through these efforts, with Milwaukee County recently reporting a 46% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

The plan also describes how Milwaukee County will avoid new sources of emissions, pursue energy efficiency practices, and so much more.

Again, partnerships will be crucial in making this effort effective.

I'm looking forward to collaborating with the County Board and community stakeholders to implement our Climate Action Plan that will promote clean energy and combat the climate crisis in Wisconsin.

All of the efforts I've described are helping us advance our vision of becoming the healthiest community in Wisconsin by achieving equity – not just in race, but in all measurable areas.

Let's discuss equity, because we've been hearing a lot of talk lately.

It seems like some people have developed a misunderstanding of what "equity" really means.

Here at Milwaukee County, we are committed to serving residents and providing opportunities for businesses throughout our *entire* community.

Because at the end of the day, equity-based efforts are imperative to our work.

It's how we utilize data to target our resources, programs, and investments most effectively to provide support where it's most needed.

We believe that equity-based policies benefit everyone, not just those harmed by systemic oppression.

I often say a rising tide lifts all boats. And I believe an equitable community improves systems for everyone.

Whether we're talking about making sure public transit is available in every corner of the county...

Or addressing health disparities to save lives...

Or ensuring access to job opportunities for workers...

Or expanding access to affordable housing for residents...

When outcomes improve for historically marginalized individuals and groups, fewer people will require services and support.

This saves taxpayer dollars and allows our resources to have a greater impact.

If the goal for us is to make government more efficient, I can't think of a better way than targeting resources where they are needed most.

And I'm not just saying that. We have a long history and a track record of this effective work.

In expanding our scope, my administration renamed the Office of African American Affairs into the Office of Equity to intentionally broaden the County's efforts and help ensure we are uplifting more people.

Let me repeat that: We want to lift up MORE people – not fewer.

And we accomplish that by meeting the needs of everyone across our County – older adults, veterans, people with disabilities, and individuals of all races, genders, and religions.

Looking ahead, the work does not stop. We must and will continue to support our most vulnerable populations.

This message extends beyond County government. From our business community to our philanthropic partners, your support is needed now more than ever in supporting important equity-centered community efforts, like Milwaukee's cultural festivals and arts programs.

Overall, I want us to remain laser focused on doing right by the families and children right in our own backyard.

That's why you re-elected me with 85% of the vote last year: To continue directing investments and services where they are needed most.

But my bottom line is this: Partnerships lead Milwaukee forward. And because of partnerships, Milwaukee is leading Wisconsin forward.

Look, there is no bright future for Wisconsin without coming together, listening to one another, and finding common ground to get things done.

And this includes partnerships with our elected leaders.

March is Women's History Month, and under the leadership of County Board Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson, we marked a historic milestone last year with the largest number of female Supervisors ever serving on the Milwaukee County Board. Now that's something to celebrate!

Now, I want to take a moment and recognize the recently elected members of the Milwaukee County Board, including Supervisors Sky Capriolo, Anne O'Connor, Jack Eckblad, and Justin Bielinski. I look forward to working with you and the entire board to deliver for our community.

I also want to congratulate my friend and partner, Liz Sumner, on shattering another glass ceiling by becoming the first woman in history to be elected Milwaukee County Comptroller. Let's give it up for Liz!

As we all know, there is new leadership in Washington, D.C.

And here's the deal: I'm willing to work with anyone if it means we can deliver results for working families in Milwaukee County.

But I do not agree with taking away programs and services that people rely on.

I do not believe cuts to programs like Medicaid do anything to support families, children, people with disabilities, and seniors.

I do not believe service reductions and layoffs at federal agencies like the VA do anything to support our veterans and their families.

I do not believe that eliminating the Department of Education does anything to help our kids succeed and live healthy lives, particularly as it relates to our Birth-to-3 program that Supervisor Caroline Gómez-Tom has championed.

I do not believe taking away tools that support historically marginalized businesses and workers does anything to lift up our communities and deliver prosperity for families and children.

I do not believe that targeting members of our immigrant community does anything to keep our economy running, grow our population, and foster safer neighborhoods.

I know Supervisor Juan Miguel Martinez and others agree with this, and I'll keep standing in solidarity with all hardworking, law-abiding people in Wisconsin.

We will continue to navigate these tumultuous times together, but like I said, partnerships will be key.

By working together, we can achieve great things.

And because we work together, I can confidently say: The State of our County is getting stronger, healthier, and brighter each and every day.

We know a strong Milwaukee County means a strong State of Wisconsin. And I'll continue coming to work every day for those I serve.

To do right by the community that raised me.

To find common ground. To get things done.

And to lead Milwaukee County into the future.

And I look forward to our continued partnership. May God bless you all. And thank you.