June 14, 2017

Dear Governor Walker,

As the citizens of Milwaukee County wait to see if President Trump will appoint Sheriff David Clarke to a Homeland Security position, we write to urge you to consider a number of qualifications in any individual you may appoint to become Milwaukee County Sheriff.

Under Clarke’s leadership, extreme human rights abuses in the jail have been committed by guards including sexual assaults, deaths of community members, and the shackling of pregnant mothers even during childbirth. Sheriff Clarke has demonstrated a willful disregard for these abuses and the people of Milwaukee deserve a quality sheriff.

Given Clarke’s announcement that there is a pending appointment to a federal position, and that you will be in the position to appoint an interim sheriff, we urge you to prioritize the following vital characteristics in selecting a new appointee for this important role.

We believe that the following qualities are mandatory for any candidate for Sheriff:

- Demonstrated experience running a jail that treats the incarcerated with dignity, ensures safety and provides quality medical services and food. This includes an understanding that many inmates may have mental health issues that have been undiagnosed or untreated and need to be addressed appropriately. Milwaukee County should also be implementing national best practices for treatment of juveniles, transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, and eliminate solitary confinement.

- Proven commitment to public safety and the reduction of crime, and a commitment not to enroll in the ICE 287(g) program or comply with ICE detainer or notification requests that are not accompanied by a federal judge's warrant. Our sheriff must categorically refuse to enter into any Intergovernmental Service Agreement (IGSA) contract with ICE to detain immigrants in deportation proceedings. Racial profiling, discrimination in policing, and targeting of community members because of their nationality or immigration status traumatizes communities, separates families, and deters reporting of crimes, resulting in less safe communities.

- Commitment to upholding the constitutionally-protected rights of residents, including First Amendment rights of freedom to assemble and to petition your government and preserving the dignity and safety of all residents regardless of race, color, national origin, ethnicity, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, disability, citizenship, veteran status, or record of arrest and/or conviction.
• Dedication to working with diverse community members – such as the ones represented by the coalition of organizations signing this letter and organizations whose members are Black, Latinx, Asian, LGTBQ, Muslim, low income, or working class – to build accountability and trust with law enforcement, and provide alternatives to mass incarceration with the goal of creating healthy and safe communities.

• Commitment to end state violence against Black communities and to end the criminalization and dehumanization of Black people. We need a sheriff who respects the Black Lives Matter movement for racial justice.

• Willingness to act in concert with the Milwaukee County government and to follow the resolutions and ordinances passed by the county, especially the county non-discrimination resolution. Meaningful participation in the Milwaukee Community Justice Council (CJC) to reduce over-incarceration.

• Commitment to creating a safe environment for deputies, staff and inmates at the jail. This includes creating early warning systems, holding personnel accountable for unlawful or negligent actions, and providing programs for education, treatment and rehabilitation.

• Commitment to not privatize law enforcement functions and to cut ties with private companies who profit from the criminalization of our communities, lack transparency and accountability, and whose practices result in abuses and deaths.

• Respect for families, and recognition that women and expectant mothers have unique rights and a commitment to protect those rights.

• Willingness to ensure that healthcare services in the jail are provided by a not-for-profit entity and commitment to partner with the caregivers inside the jail through collective bargaining to address the policies, practices, and conditions inside the jail.

Sincerely,

Voces de la Frontera
Uplifting Black Liberation and Black Communities (UBLAC)
Ex-Prisoners Organizing (EXPO)
American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin
Wisdom
Genderqueer Milwaukee
Working Families Party
Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals (WFNHP)
Progressive Moms of Milwaukee
Democratic Socialists of America – Milwaukee Chapter
Wisconsin Transgender Health Coalition

Citizen Action of Wisconsin
Organizing for Action
African-American Roundtable
Shorewood Solidarity Network
State Rep. David Bowen