



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE  
*Milwaukee County*  
CHRIS ABELE • COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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**ICYMI: County Executive Chris Abele Lays Out Path to \$15/Hour Minimum Wage**

**MILWAUKEE** – Ahead of his 2017 budget proposal, Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele announced a series of investments in Milwaukee’s future, to include a sustainable path towards a living wage.

In an editorial published in today’s Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Abele laid out his commitment to investing in programs and infrastructure that attack the root causes of systemic poverty and racial inequities, such as workforce development, efforts to address income inequality, criminal justice reform, public safety and mental health, and transportation.

Two specific proposals in the upcoming budget, which will be introduced on September 30th, are a path to a living wage for County workers and contractors, and a \$665,000 additional investment workforce development efforts -- largely aimed at youth -- in neighborhoods with the highest poverty and unemployment rates, such as the Sherman Park neighborhood.

“But just having a job isn’t enough,” Abele wrote. “We need to invest in ways to put people on the path to a family-sustaining career, which is why I am putting a stake in the ground in Milwaukee County by joining the movement for a living wage. Building on a foundation laid by the County Board, this budget will establish a sustainable path to a \$15 per hour minimum wage for County workers and contractors by 2021. And it will send a strong message to other employers that investing in our workers is investing in our community and our future.”

Read the editorial in its entirety below or at:

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/opinion/contributors/2016/09/27/abele-invest-milwaukeees-future/91184528/>

**Abele: Let’s invest in Milwaukee’s future**

As I took the oath of office a few months ago at Moody Park, I made a commitment to the people of Milwaukee County.

We will no longer accept the fact that Milwaukee is the worst city to live for African Americans, with the highest incarceration rates and child poverty rates in the nation, as our irreversible reality. We have to directly and powerfully attack each of one of the causes of the racial inequities we face. To get to the root of these problems, we must make deeper investments in sustainable programs and infrastructure that strengthen our community, such as workforce development, efforts to address income inequality, criminal justice reform, public safety and mental health and transportation.

When I hear from people in our community at coffee shops or in budget listening sessions, on the north side of the city or in the suburbs, they tell me that these are their priorities. People in Milwaukee County work hard, and they don't ask for too much in return – a family-supporting wage for their labor, a reliable way to get to and from work and around town, a safe and healthy neighborhood to raise their kids in. Most of all, they just want a level playing field and an equal opportunity to live a better a life.

There is a particular lack of opportunity for young people in our community. This budget looks to help change that by making a \$665,000 additional investment in workforce development efforts — largely aimed at youth — in neighborhoods with the highest poverty and unemployment rates. The Boys & Girls Club of Milwaukee will receive \$165,000 in funding to serve teenagers at the club in Sherman Park and similar neighborhoods by facilitating job placement and helping kids set career and educational goals for the future. In 2015, more than 300 teenagers found employment through the efforts of the club.

In addition, \$500,000 will go towards expanding the efforts of the successful UpLift Milwaukee program, a partnership between Milwaukee County and Employ Milwaukee. In the first half of 2016, UpLift Milwaukee was able to place more than 100 individuals from Milwaukee's highest unemployed ZIP codes into jobs averaging \$15 per hour. In 2017, with this investment, UpLift Milwaukee will expand its mobile access points to bring career counseling to the people who need it the most, including service in Sherman Park and similar neighborhoods.

But just having a job isn't enough. We need to invest in ways to put people on the path to a family-sustaining career, which is why I am putting a stake in the ground in Milwaukee County by joining the movement for a living wage. Building on a foundation laid by the County Board, this budget will establish a sustainable path to a \$15 per hour minimum wage for county workers and contractors by 2021. And it will send a strong message to other employers that investing in our workers is investing in our community and our future.

While the County Board and I have disagreed in the past on the best approach to increasing the minimum wage, I know we share the belief that no one who works full time should have to live in poverty. Most people agree with us; a majority of Wisconsinites support increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour.

As I introduce my budget over the next week to the County Board, I hope to partner with supervisors on these initiatives and hear more from the community about what we can do, together, to invest in a better future for all of Milwaukee County.

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