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County Executive and Sheriff Working Together to Protect Taxpayers

MILWAUKEE – Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele and Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clarke are announcing a crackdown on employees abusing medical leave.

This week, a Sheriff's Office employee was brought up on termination charges after an investigation by the Milwaukee County Risk Management Division showed the employee was using her federally protected medical leave (FMLA) under false pretenses.

"FMLA is vitally important for employees who truly need medical leave; when those benefits are abused, it hurts taxpayers and those who depend on this protection," County Executive Abele said. "We will continue to aggressively root out this type of abuse to protect medical leave for those who truly need it. I'm happy to work with the Sheriff and his staff on making sure the system is not abused."

"What we have seen is that if strict oversight is not implemented some, not all, will exploit the situation, as happened here. County Executive Abele and I are sending a message that abuse of this family law will result in severe consequences. This abuse also places a burden on coworkers who have to fill in the void left by their absences," said Sheriff Clarke.

The employee claimed she needed to obtain a federally-protected medical leave due to a health condition. A medical certification from the employee's medical provider indicated the woman needed 12 weeks off because of the condition. The certification said the employee was restricted from "ambulating longer / greater than 10-15 feet" and restricted from having "close interaction with multiple people".

The leave was initially granted; however, in March, the Risk Management Division received a tip that the medical leave was not needed. Risk Management performed an investigation into the validity of the FMLA leave application, which included video and photo surveillance.

On two separate dates, investigators filmed the employee walking distances much further than 15 feet and taking part in classes that included multiple people, both things beyond the scope of medical restrictions for which the leave was granted. In light of the new evidence, the employee's leave was revoked and the information was referred to the Sheriff's Office for further investigation.