



MILWAUKEE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Supervisor Shawn Rolland - District 6

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Milwaukee County ARPA Task Force Endorses Medical Debt Abolishment Proposal

Sup. Rolland Plan Leverages \$1.6 Million in Federal Rescue
Funds to Create Approximately \$153 Million in Debt Relief

MILWAUKEE – By a vote of 4 to 1, the Milwaukee County American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Task Force endorsed a [resolution](#) sponsored by ARPA Task Force Co-Chair Supervisor Shawn Rolland (District 6) to allocate approximately \$1.6 million in federal ARPA funding to RIP Medical Debt (RIP) in order to purchase and erase an estimated \$153 million in medical debt held by approximately 67,000 Milwaukee County residents in financial need. Co-sponsored by Supervisors Liz Sumner, Felesia Martin, Juan Miguel Martinez and Ryan Clancy, the proposal is expected to advance to the county's Finance Committee for consideration in March 2023. If approved, RIP would then contract with local hospitals to acquire qualifying medical debt and communicate relief to residents by mail. Medical debt relief can't be requested and is source-driven.

Supervisor Rolland, Wauwatosa Alderman Andrew Meindl and RIP Medical Debt CEO Allison Sesso released the following statements:

*"This strategic, high-impact, evidence-based proposal could be transformational in the lives of thousands of our neighbors, and a significant step forward in Milwaukee County's efforts to become the healthiest county in Wisconsin," said **Sup. Rolland**. "The scale of positive change that this proposal creates – \$1,000 in medical debt cancelled for every \$10 invested – is unmatched by any other proposal our ARPA Task Force has reviewed. Medical debt is the leading cause of bankruptcy in America and its impact on individuals' physical and mental health is immense, harming community health outcomes. It's more prevalent in Milwaukee County than the national average, and while it can impact anyone, it disproportionately impacts people in need and people of color. Forgiving the debt can free our neighbors from their hardship and help them get back to pursuing their dreams."*

*“Medical Debt ruins lives and prevents dollars from circulating in our communities and small businesses,” **Alderman Meindl**. “In many cases, health outcomes and the associated medical debt are no fault of the individual. Wauwatosa has been the home of the medical campus for many years. Our residents are affected by this. I feel it is vital that we support this initiative. RIP Medical Debt estimates this program of medical debt relief would impact at least 1,600 Wauwatosans and over 60,000 residents in Milwaukee County. These are our families, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. The benefit for Wauwatosans and those in the region will have far-reaching positive outcomes. This allocation of ARPA dollars is a win for Wauwatosa hospitals, the community, and residents. It has been an honor to be part of this team.”*

*“We’re very excited at the prospect of working with local government partners in Milwaukee and Wauwatosa and appreciate their hard work in communicating the range of social benefits that come with our medical debt abolishment model,” shares RIP Medical Debt CEO and president, **Allison Sesso**. “To be clear, this isn’t a long-term solution. But it draws attention to the issue, helps remove the unwarranted stigma of medical debt in this country and provides direct, financial and emotional relief to residents in need right now. No one should have to ration their insulin or choose between medical treatment and groceries.”*

Milwaukee County Board Supervisor Rolland represents neighborhoods in Wauwatosa and Milwaukee’s Washington Heights.

Wauwatosa Alderman Andrew Meindl represents District 1 on the Wauwatosa Common Council.

RIP Medical Debt (RIP) is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit that was founded in 2014 by two former debt collectors. To date RIP has acquired — and abolished — over \$8.5 billion of burdensome medical debt, helping over 5.5 million families and addressing a major social determinant of health. RIP purchases debts for a fraction of their face value in bundled portfolios and partners with individuals, faith-based organizations, government, foundations and corporations to empower donors by converting every dollar contributed into \$100 of medical debt relief on average. RIP also partners with hospitals and health systems and physician groups to acquire medical debt for abolishment. RIP rose to national prominence on an episode of HBO’s “Last Week Tonight” with John Oliver in which RIP facilitated the abolishment of \$15M in medical debt. To learn more, visit: <https://ripmedicaldebt.org>.

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