

**2026 State of the County Address**  
*Prepared for Delivery*

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Thank you for joining us today for the 2026 State of the County Address.

Every year, I look out at this room filled with our community's leaders, partners, and residents, and I'm reminded that none of the work we do in Milwaukee County happens alone.

It takes all of us, coming together to build something bigger than any one person or one office could accomplish on their own.

That spirit of collaboration is exactly what today is about, and I'm grateful to all of you for being partners in this work.

Before we dive in, I want to take a moment to recognize the incredible Milwaukeeans who gave their time and talent to make this morning so special, including:

- The Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office and Milwaukee County Fire Department Honor Guard for presenting the colors.
- The amazing Milwaukee High School of the Arts Concert Chorale for their beautiful rendition of our National Anthem.
- And to Sarah Bruett, one of our impressive Milwaukee County Youth Commission Co-Chairs, for reminding us that our young people aren't just our future leaders. They're already leading the way today.

We also want to acknowledge our incredible host, Potawatomi Casino Hotel.

I want to thank Dominic Ortiz and his entire team for welcoming us with hospitality and excitement – particularly during a very busy season.

If you're wondering what I'm talking about, make sure to stop by the new Potawatomi Sportsbook to catch some March Madness basketball after today's program.

Hopefully, your bracket survives the first round without too many upsets!

And for me, it's On Wisconsin all the way!

This is just one activity that makes Potawatomi a dynamic hub for recreation, entertainment, and community pride.

Their investments in Milwaukee County are generating economic activity, creating jobs, and doing it all while giving back to the community through the Heart of Canal Street program, which has contributed over \$21 million to local children's charities.

The campus where we are gathered today is owned and operated by the Forest County Potawatomi, a powerful reminder of Milwaukee County and Wisconsin's history as the ancestral homeland of 11 Tribal Nations, including the Potawatomi nation.

As we honor the original stewards, we must continue to respect their deep connection to the land and commit to building our future together.

Again, thank you to Potawatomi for hosting us today. Let's give them round of applause for everything they do to energize and strengthen Milwaukee County!

And last but certainly not least, I want to thank Lizz Stachura for her lovely introduction.

Lizz has worked hard for many years building up her business, Tootsie's Tea.

Many of you have probably met Lizz at community events like the Riverwest Farmers Market where she's famous for selling her signature loose leaf tea.

Like so many entrepreneurs in the Badger State, Lizz is chasing the American dream.

But she'll be the first to tell you that starting a business, turning a profit, and keeping the lights on comes with its own unique set of challenges and obstacles.

At Milwaukee County, we understand that journey well.

We have a strong history of supporting economic development efforts by utilizing our real estate assets to attract investments and boost job growth.

Milwaukee County's Office of Economic Inclusion also continues working with local contractors and firms to invest back into our community.

Those efforts have produced significant results, but we can always do more.

That's why during last year's State of the County Address, I called on my administration to build bridges between small businesses, entrepreneurs, supportive organizations, and municipalities looking to fill, and in most cases, refill spaces in their commercial corridors.

And it's why we partnered with the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation to create the Building Bridges Program.

Through this effort, we've already awarded \$10,000 grants to 20 small businesses across Milwaukee County.

Since the program launched last summer, I've had the privilege of visiting a number of the Building Bridges grant recipients – including Tootsie's Tea, which will officially open its doors later this year.

Lizz, I can't wait to be one of your first customers. We're all cheering on your success.

Please join me in giving Lizz a well-deserved round of applause for helping grow our Made in Milwaukee economy!

In addition to supporting entrepreneurs like Lizz, my Building Bridges Program provides technical support to help expand brick-and-mortar businesses across Milwaukee County.

And since its inception, we estimate that the program has leveraged over \$1.8 million in small business investments, supporting over 120 jobs in the process.

It's my hope that the Building Bridges Program will inspire communities throughout Wisconsin and become a model for sustainable economic growth statewide.

Now, I know you can't build a bridge from just one side.

You need to work with your partners, your collaborators, and frankly, your whole village, to build from both sides and meet in the middle.

And we have sturdy bridges in every corner of Milwaukee County, keeping partnerships strong and neighborhoods connected.

Doubling down on this work is more important than ever. As the cost of living continues to rise, I've heard from residents and families who are struggling to afford basic necessities, pay their bills, and financially support their children.

As a husband and father, I share your frustrations.

That's why I believe we must focus on these building blocks to close the distance between where too many families are and where they deserve to be.

Bridge building is a key part of Milwaukee County's history. Since our inception in 1835, all of our forward-looking momentum has been rooted in strong collaboration.

Many of our region's development successes, including Fiserv Forum and the Deer District, ThriveOn King, and the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center, have been the result of connections built between dedicated partners across various sectors.

Whether we're talking about affordable housing, access to health care, or economic opportunity, my administration is committed to building and reinforcing the bridges that produce the meaningful and lasting results that Milwaukee County residents deserve.

We've been building bridges alongside our departments to fulfill our responsibility to Milwaukee County taxpayers.

Since I was elected, my administration has been putting cranes in the sky and empowering union workers on the ground to build up our communities.

And I'll repeat one of my favorite sayings... From "A" to "Z" – meaning from the Airport to the Zoo – we are creating opportunities and growth for residents and families.

This year, Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport turns 100 years old, proving that time really does fly!

Back in 1926, Milwaukee County purchased the former Hamilton Airport property and renamed it Milwaukee County Airport.

Over the past century, our hometown airport has served over 300 million passengers, connecting residents to opportunities across the globe while welcoming visitors to our vibrant region.

And to celebrate, we're making significant progress on two major capital projects that will help revitalize the airport for the next 100 years.

Construction is nearing completion on the new MKE Air Cargo project, a major investment that will transform the way regional businesses and suppliers transport their products.

By avoiding the long shipping delays that we see in Milwaukee's biggest suburb – otherwise known as Chicago – the new Milwaukee Air Cargo Center will move materials and products faster, more reliably, and at a lower cost.

That means more predictable deliveries and lower prices for manufacturers, businesses, and consumers alike.

I am proud this development will create jobs and support our regional economy – all at zero cost to local taxpayers.

And speaking of projects that cost Milwaukee County taxpayers zero dollars, we're moving forward with the redevelopment of Concourse E, bringing a smoother, more convenient travel experience for passengers.

By late next year, the new concourse will be fully operational, supporting opportunities to welcome even more domestic and international flights – generating more tourism dollars, more business connections, and more chances to showcase everything the Milwaukee area has to offer.

Simply put, these investments are building the bridges that connect Milwaukee County to the rest of the world.

As I always say, the more we all fly from MKE, the better it gets.

And the same goes for the Milwaukee County Zoo – more visitors means more opportunities to offer new, unique experiences – like the rhino care center that we opened last year.

This final phase of Adventure Africa welcomes Eastern Black Rhinos back to Milwaukee County and strengthens the Zoo's reputation as the premiere place for education, conservation, and family fun for all.

And those aren't the only exciting capital projects that we're investing in.

Despite rising construction costs driven by increased tariffs and inflation, my administration has managed to break ground and celebrate the opening of several new facilities over the past year.

This includes the new home to our Department of Health & Human Services, the Marcia P. Coggs Center.

For the first time in Milwaukee County history, DHHS has a building designed specifically to deliver health and human services for the community.

This is truly a generational investment to remove barriers to services and meet people where they are.

It's putting vital health services for families, children, seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, and our most vulnerable residents under one roof.

Director Shakita LaGrant-McClain puts it best when she says: "It's more than just a building, it's a lifeline."

And I couldn't agree more.

I'm grateful we created this lifeline to our "No Wrong Door" model that continues improving access to care.

By building bridges between DHHS service areas, "No Wrong Door" is connecting residents and families to programs they may not even know exist, helping them more easily access whatever services they need.

And while we are constantly making improvements, I want to see the "No Wrong Door" model expand across all departments and services within County government.

Because one of the best ways to save taxpayer dollars is to boost efficiency and streamline the way we conduct business.

So, with this in mind, I am proud to announce that my administration is pursuing a new, ambitious initiative that focuses on what the future of County government looks like.

The Future State Project is a comprehensive effort to reimagine how Milwaukee County serves everyone who lives, works, and plays in our community.

The key question behind the Future State Project is this: Do our current systems, policies, and programs truly support the future we want to create?

Now, let me explain: We know that we cannot change health outcomes in our community by doing things the way we've always done them.

We also know that many of our programs, services, and policies were not designed to serve the changing needs of our diverse community.

That's why the Future State Project focuses on how we operate today.

A couple weeks ago, we unveiled the draft recommendations.

Expanding the scope of "No Wrong Door" across County government is one of those recommendations, but they also cover key priorities like improving access to legal services, lifting up early childhood development efforts, and creating more affordable housing options for working families.

I recognize that rising housing costs are on the minds of Milwaukeeans every day, but my administration is taking steps to address this crisis head-on.

Just last week, I toured the construction site of the former Bucyrus-Erie campus in South Milwaukee.

In partnership with Mayor Jim Shelenske and the Commission on Aging, we are helping redevelop this area to deliver more affordable housing options and a new senior center that will serve south side residents and older adults for years to come.

This is just one example of our commitment to investing in affordable housing, because we know that stable housing is at the heart of a safe, healthy community.

Since I took office, we have committed nearly \$50 million toward the development of affordable housing, particularly in our suburban municipalities – because we need affordable housing everywhere.

These developments have made a difference for Milwaukee County residents across the full spectrum of housing needs, from our unsheltered neighbors to first-time homebuyers, and everybody in between.

This past November, we celebrated the construction progress of The Hampton, an affordable housing community in Whitefish Bay that was made possible through steadfast grassroots advocacy.

Soon, we will break ground on the County's first-ever affordable housing subdivision for homeownership in Oak Creek.

And this year, we'll wrap up the development of more than 100 new homes for first-time homeowners, built in partnership with Milwaukee Habitat for Humanity and the Emem Group.

In January, I met Rhonda Murphy, one of the first-time homeowners.

Raised in rental properties throughout her life with little exposure to homeownership, Rhonda is now shaping a brighter future for her family.

Thanks to the partnership we built with Milwaukee Habitat, Rhonda recently closed on a new house in the Midtown neighborhood that she will – one day – pass down to her son and family.

Please join me in congratulating Rhonda and every other resident that we have empowered to achieve the dream of homeownership!

We also recognize it's not enough for homes to just be affordable.

They also need to be safe, which is why my administration launched a new program to reduce lead-based paint hazards in owner-occupied homes all across Milwaukee County.

Because when we solve housing challenges, we create the foundation that families need to build a bridge to the future they deserve.

And look, our efforts are truly working.

2025 data shows that – once again – Milwaukee County had the lowest unsheltered population count per capita in the entire country.

Nationally, we're seen as a leader in this space.

That's because time-and-time again, we've shown that a Housing First approach works.

We know the only way to bridge the gap between homelessness and stability is by getting our residents into homes.

Since we implemented the Housing First model, we've reduced our homeless population by 75% in under 10 years, saving Milwaukee County taxpayers over \$30 million in the process.

And at the beginning of this year, we took on an even more active role to ensure people can access the housing and supportive services they need.

By engaging local landlords to eliminate barriers for vulnerable residents trying to secure safe and affordable housing, my administration has stabilized nearly 300 households.

We partnered with Project RETURN to provide housing and wraparound services for newly released Community Reintegration Center residents that will help them maintain sobriety, employment, and health as they return to their communities.

Additionally, the DHHS Housing Services team has taken on a new role as the lead agency for the region's coordinated entry system, building bridges between individuals experiencing homelessness and the wraparound services that can change the direction of their lives.

My administration remains committed to building on this progress to end homelessness in Milwaukee County.

Because as someone who knows firsthand what housing insecurity feels like, this isn't just good policy; it's deeply personal.

The same is true for mental health.

Like many Milwaukeeans, I've seen the toll that untreated mental health struggles can have on that individual, their families, and the community as a whole.

That's why strengthening and expanding access to mental and behavioral health services remains a core mission of my administration – because getting people the help they need is how we build a healthier, more resilient Milwaukee County.

One of the clearest examples of this commitment is the impact of the Mental Health Emergency Center, which we relocated from Wauwatosa to the King Park neighborhood, where the vast majority of residents seeking these services live and work.

In 2025, the Mental Health Emergency Center served nearly 8,000 individuals experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis, showing what's possible when access is no longer a barrier.

The Office of Emergency Management is also working to ensure residents are connected to care when they need it – reducing repeat 911 calls and improving health outcomes across the county.

Through a new Mobile Integrated Health initiative, we're building bridges between Milwaukee County EMS, clinicians, and community health partners to deliver proactive, patient-centered care for residents facing a mental health crisis.

Also, late last year, we installed suicide prevention signs in Milwaukee County Parks across the community.

Since 2020, nearly 40 people have lost their lives to suicide in our parks.

In 2024, one of them was my best friend, Jonathan Brostoff.

His loss was a painful reminder of how critical it is that we continue breaking the silence around mental health and creating spaces where people feel seen, supported, and safe to ask for help.

And together, we're sending a simple message: That help exists. That healing is possible. And that hope is just one phone call away.

All too often, mental health struggles and addiction coexist, so it's crucial that we also build bridges to behavioral health services to address substance use disorders directly.

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

And the initiatives we've built with those partners are making a measurable difference.

In 2024, Milwaukee County saw a 30% decrease in opioid overdose deaths, and preliminary 2025 data shows that we are on track for another substantial decline.

These encouraging trends reflect the power of partnership.

By working alongside other harm reduction service providers to make life-saving supplies like NARCAN more accessible, we are saving lives – and that means more opportunities for treatment, recovery, and a path forward.

But just because we're seeing results doesn't mean we can take our foot off the gas.

Even one life lost to overdose is one too many. No one should have to experience the devastating grief of losing a loved one to this crisis.

Which is why we remain committed to investing in these initiatives.

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

And we have put those funds to work supporting a wide range of strategies to reduce fatal overdoses – from countywide distribution of harm reduction supplies and connections to residential substance abuse treatment facilities, to improving the data that informs our policy decisions.

This year, we're launching a new tool that will use real-time data to assist our efforts on the ground.

In collaboration with regional health partners, we're investing in technology to implement a data-driven alert system that will detect notable overdose spikes.

This system will deploy key personnel throughout Milwaukee County to mobilize community resources, mitigate current harm, and prevent near-term overdoses.

This has the potential to save even more lives, and I want to thank our Chief Health Policy Advisor, Dr. Ben Weston, and all of our partners for keeping up the fight against the opioid epidemic.

Through our Better Ways to Cope initiative, we're centering the community in our harm reduction efforts – equipping organizations with the tools, resources, and funding that they need to make a real impact.

I recently met with several of these community-based organizations that have received opioid settlement dollars to deliver prevention, treatment, and recovery services to underserved populations.

And while they shared the heartbreaking realities they've witnessed in the community, I also heard an unshakable sense of resilience, perseverance, and hope.

One of those stories was from Startina White.

Startina was able to access life-changing support services as she battled her own addiction journey, and now she's helping others do the same in her role at Wisconsin Community Services.

Startina's story reminds us just how personal this work is for so many in our community.

That's why we keep building bridges to combat the opioid epidemic through evidence-based solutions.

Why? Because so many lives depend on it.

Lives also depend on the dedication of our emergency response teams in Milwaukee County.

In 2024, the Office of Emergency Management launched a pilot program to administer whole blood transfusions in the field.

This program allows first responders to deliver immediate, lifesaving care, rather than having to wait until the patient reaches the hospital.

And those critical minutes could mean the difference between life and death.

Since its launch, 45 patients across the county have received whole blood transfusions following severe injury and trauma.

That's 45 people who were given a fighting chance to survive – a chance they wouldn't have had before this program existed.

Milwaukee County was the first EMS system in Wisconsin—and among the first fire-based EMS systems in the nation—to deliver prehospital blood to critically injured patients.

I am deeply grateful to OEM and our municipal fire departments for their leadership, compassion, and commitment to saving lives.

And in one case, their swift response saved two lives.

A young woman had suffered post-partum hemorrhaging after giving birth at home.

What should have been one of the happiest days in her life became one of the most terrifying.

But because of the skilled response from EMS paramedics and the availability of whole blood, she was able to receive a transfusion before the situation became fatal.

Today, she is healthy, she is home, and she is able to care for her baby.

That's the incredible impact of this program. It's a powerful reminder of what's possible when we build bridges centered on saving lives.

We're honored to be joined today by Milwaukee-area first responders who are administering blood transfusions and saving lives every single day.

Can you please stand and be recognized for your heroic work?

When emergencies strike, it's our first responders who spring into action, and I want to take a moment to acknowledge their extraordinary work following one of the most serious weather events we've experienced in recent memory.

Last August, extreme storms and historic flooding hit Southeastern Wisconsin.

The damage was profound and tested our community's strength and perseverance.

In the days and weeks that followed, I visited impacted neighborhoods and met with residents, families, and business owners who lost their belongings. Who lost their homes. Who lost everything.

But, because of the swift action and courage of our first responders, lives were protected, and for that, we owe them a debt of gratitude.

Our emergency response and public health professionals came together to support residents during that challenging time – many of whom were simultaneously navigating flood damage in their own homes.

They showed up for our community even when they needed to support themselves.

Because that's what we do in an emergency. We roll up our sleeves and we get to work.

Milwaukee County OEM stood up a coordinated Emergency Operations Center, working closely with our state and municipal partners, including Mayor Cavalier Johnson, County departments, and community organizations.

We worked quickly to compile data on the damage we suffered, identify essential resources, share critical information with the public, and help residents clean up their homes and neighborhoods.

In the days following the storm, amidst the heartbreak and devastation, I saw the best of our community.

Neighbors showed up to help their neighbors. Businesses stepped up to support those in need. And the spirit of service that defines us was stronger than ever.

The resilience of our community is something that I will never take for granted.

I want to thank the Wisconsin Emergency Management division for their steadfast leadership and dedication to delivering recovery resources when we needed it the most.

And thank you to the FEMA employees – who worked without pay during a government shutdown – to distribute over \$152 million to more than 30,000 Milwaukee County residents and households, kickstarting their road to recovery.

I am incredibly grateful that our residents were able to access the financial support they needed to repair their homes and businesses.

But our recovery efforts were dealt an incredibly disappointing blow when the Trump administration denied Public Assistance to the State of Wisconsin – without even providing a reason.

The cost to repair the damage to our public assets – like roads, parks, and public buildings – they still loom over us, but we must move forward without federal assistance.

My administration will continue working to advocate for resources and identify responsible funding solutions so we can repair our public infrastructure.

Because our taxpayers should not be forced to shoulder the full cost of disasters beyond their control.

But if there's one lesson we can take away from the August floods, it's that coordination saves lives.

When disaster strikes, the bridges we've built between governing agencies, local organizations, and the community are what hold everything together.

And having a central hub for our emergency response efforts is critical to how well we're able to respond in these times of crisis.

That's why I'm proud to share that this summer, the Office of Emergency Management will move into a new, state-of-the-art home inside the Forensic Science and Protective Medicine Facility in Wauwatosa.

This facility is the result of our partnership with the State of Wisconsin and the Medical College of Wisconsin to create a long-overdue, dedicated home for the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner and significantly enhance operations for OEM.

When we open the doors to this facility later this year, Milwaukee County will have a new tool in our public safety continuum that reflects our commitment to these efforts.

It will also help provide critical support for everyone who is working on the ground to make our communities safer.

To address violence in Milwaukee, we need to look deeper than the symptoms.

We must take a comprehensive approach to tackle the root causes – the social, economic, and structural factors that allow violence to persist.

That's why my administration invests in preventative efforts like the Credible Messengers Program to engage with young people involved in the justice system.

I recently sat down with our Credible Messengers, including 414Life, Running Rebels, the Youth Advocate Program, Westcare Wisconsin, and many others to discuss how we're using public health solutions to prevent violence before it starts.

The bridges that have been built between these organizations and our community have produced encouraging results.

In 2025, Milwaukee saw a 15-percent decrease in youth victims of homicides and nonfatal shootings, compared to 2024, as well as a 46-percent reduction in victims of retaliatory violence.

By investing upstream, we're doing more than just preventing violence in our neighborhoods.

We're keeping young people out of the criminal justice system and putting them on a brighter path forward.

But if we want a safer future for Milwaukee County, we must get serious about reckless driving.

Motor vehicle collisions remain one of the leading causes of death and disability in our county, but that's not something we have to accept.

Because the fact of the matter is that traffic deaths are entirely preventable.

That's why my administration is committed to advancing Vision Zero, our initiative to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2037.

Earlier this week, I announced that all 19 of our municipalities have created their own safety action plans, tailored to address the specific risks and hazards in each community.

Just recently, Milwaukee County secured \$25 million to fund 67 traffic safety projects along our most hazardous roadways, including pedestrian infrastructure upgrades, traffic calming measures, and much more.

And while those projects get underway, our Department of Transportation crews have been incorporating Vision Zero principles into their daily work and developing a series of traffic calming activities to make streets safer everywhere.

But the Department of Transportation isn't just tasked with making our streets safer. They're also working to build a more sustainable future for public transit in Milwaukee County.

For thousands of residents, a strong, reliable public transit system is non-negotiable.

It's essential infrastructure for our community and I will always treat it that way.

But I want to be honest about what's ahead.

MCTS faces a serious structural funding challenge in 2027.

But you don't want to just hear that there's a problem. You all deserve to know what I'm going to do about it.

Under the leadership of Transportation Director Joe Lamers and MCTS President Steve Fuentes, we are pursuing a fiscally sustainable path forward that does not abandon our riders.

We are also building the coalition of state and federal partners necessary to secure the dedicated transit funding Milwaukee County cannot provide alone.

I have fought to deliver funding for this community from both the state and federal government before, and in the end, I won.

And I promise you that I will do it again.

I will continue advocating for the funding our transit system needs because the strength of our community depends on keeping people connected.

A strong, healthy community also depends on access to recreation, relaxation, and nature.

In Milwaukee County, we are fortunate to have over 150 parks for our residents to enjoy.

The Milwaukee County Parks truly are the beating heart of our neighborhoods.

Whether it's our beer gardens, our golf courses, or our community centers, more people are visiting our parks than ever before.

In 2025, we celebrated the grand openings and groundbreakings of several projects in our parks, including the transformational rehabilitation of South Shore Beach.

We also completed a 20-year plan to modernize our aging pools and aquatic assets, beginning with a bold vision for the future of the Washington Park pool.

And this year, we're celebrating a milestone anniversary: The beloved Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center turns 50 years old! That's half a century of serving as a welcoming space for neighbors to come together.

And then there's another milestone that I know many residents have been waiting a long time for.

By working with Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson-Bovell and the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors, my administration approved a plan to advance the redevelopment and restoration of the Mitchell Park Domes.

Together, we finally forged a path forward for the Domes that will preserve a treasured Milwaukee landmark, while protecting taxpayers and delivering long-term savings for the County.

And when I think about building bridges to preserve outdoor assets like our parks, I'm proud we enacted Milwaukee County's Climate Action Plan that is helping us achieve net zero carbon emissions, while advancing equity, justice, and resilience throughout our community.

By reaffirming our climate goals, we will continue to lead with urgency, transparency, and a clear vision for a more equitable and sustainable future.

Looking ahead, we must continue to navigate the turbulent fiscal environment and build bridges to ensure Milwaukee County is financially strong.

At the end of the day, none of our other priorities are possible without a solid foundation, and we have a lot to show for our efforts.

In 2024, I delivered the largest property tax cut in Milwaukee County history, which is currently keeping the levy lower than previous years and limiting the financial burden on residents as much as we can.

As a result of my administration's fiscal stewardship, Milwaukee County ended 2025 with a surplus – currently estimated at \$14 million by the Milwaukee County Comptroller's Office.

This is encouraging news for taxpayers and the services they rely on.

And I'll take it a step further. Since I've been County Executive, we've ended every single year with a budget surplus.

We accomplished this by addressing our legacy pension issues, creating more revenue sources, and building bridges with communities across Wisconsin to fund critical services.

We've also been fighting on behalf of Milwaukee County in Madison – and coming home successful.

During the last state legislative session, my team took our case to the Capitol and secured new revenues and budget provisions to fill in future gaps.

We worked with a bipartisan group of lawmakers to identify fair funding solutions.

Because of our advocacy, Milwaukee County will now be more fairly reimbursed for state-mandated services for the first time in over 60 years, saving taxpayer dollars for years to come.

This is a huge win that will help our bottom line in the long run.

And it's my hope that the budget surplus that leaders in Madison are debating will deliver meaningful property tax relief, investments in education, and additional public transit funding for people across our state.

Regardless, I'm grateful for the bipartisan relationships that we have built with members of the Wisconsin State Legislature and I look forward to working together to provide additional resources for those we serve.

And none of this would have been possible without the leadership of our great Governor, Tony Evers.

Since he took office in 2018, Governor Evers has been true partner and tireless advocate, building up progress across the state to serve Wisconsinites with dignity, integrity, and compassion.

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Governor Evers, First Lady Kathy Evers, and their family for their dedication to the Badger State.

Please join me in thanking Governor Evers for everything he has done for the people of Milwaukee County and the great State of Wisconsin.

I believe the best way to honor Governor Evers' legacy is by continuing to build the bridges that he laid the foundation for.

We know this work is more important than ever.

Since last year, a lot has happened in our community, throughout our state, and across the nation.

I was recently in Washington, D.C. where I met with governing leaders from around the country who expressed the same concerns, fears, and frustrations that we're feeling here in Wisconsin.

They're also worried about federal budget cuts that threaten to strip away services that residents rely on.

They're also closely watching federal immigration agents overtake cities and tear families, children, and neighbors away from the communities they call home.

And they, too, are exhausted by the political dysfunction and government shutdowns that make it harder for working people to put food on the table, fill up their gas tanks, pay their bills, and keep a roof over their heads.

Those fears are all real. That anger is justified.

And again, I share that overwhelming frustration.

So, here's my promise to you: I will do everything in my power to ensure that Milwaukee County does not pay the price for decisions being made in Washington, D.C.

And I will keep building bridges at the state and federal level to fight for the resources our residents deserve.

I am constantly grateful to have the partnership of United States Senator Tammy Baldwin and Congresswoman Gwen Moore in this fight.

I won't pretend that these are easy times, but leadership isn't about waiting for calm waters.

It's about responding to the changing tides and steering the ship through the storms.

So, while the political environment we find ourselves in may be unreliable, my promise to you is that my commitment to this community will not be.

I will keep investing upstream to ensure services reach the working families who need them.

I will protect the progress we have made together.

And I will not stop our pursuit of equity for every resident in Milwaukee County.

You all know me.

I grew up in Milwaukee. And now, my wife and I get to watch our three daughters do the same.

This is my home. This is my community.

I've seen the pain. I've felt the struggles.

But I've also witnessed the strength, the compassion, and the resilience that truly defines us.

And that has guided me in every chapter of my journey – from working as a community organizer, to a state lawmaker, and now, as your Milwaukee County Executive.

I will never back down from a fight.

I show up, and I get the job done.

And I believe my record speaks for itself.

Because of the bridges we've created and the people who have helped build them, I can say with confidence: The State of our County is strong – and getting healthier and brighter every single day.

Wisconsin's motto is just one word – Forward.

And I will keep moving forward, overcoming the obstacles we encounter, toward the future we deserve.

Our momentum cannot and will not stop, because this community is worth fighting for.

So, let's keep building. Together.

May God bless you all. Thank you.