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STATEMENT ANNOUNCING OUR RESIGNATIONS FROM THE MILWAUKEE FIRE
AND POLICE COMMISSION

July 20, 2023

The following is a joint statement by Milwaukee Fire and Police Commissioners
Amanda Avalos and Ed Fallon.

We hereby announce that we will resign our positions on the Board of Fire and
Police Commissioners (FPC) for the City of Milwaukee effective at 12:01 a.m. on
Friday July 21, 2023.

We are proud of the work that we have accomplished as Chair and Vice Chair of
the FPC over our tenures. This is not an easy decision for us to make. Our reasons
for taking this action are as follows:

**1. We feel that, by continuing to serve on the Milwaukee Fire and Police
Commission, our continued service might be construed as an indication that we**

accept the substantial restrictions on FPC authority contained in the recently enacted Act 12.

We do not accept these changes to the authority of the Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission. Our resignations are intended to clearly communicate to the elected officials of our State and to the members of the general public that we strongly oppose the elimination of the FPC's policymaking authority as part of Act 12.

The restrictions on FPC authority contained in Act 12 were originally proposed to Wisconsin lawmakers by a special interest group – a special interest group that regularly places itself in opposition to the FPC through its public statements and through litigation. No elected official consulted any member of the FPC before these proposals were written and included in the draft bill. If the members of the Commission had been consulted, we would have explained why these proposals were shortsighted and misguided, and why they were not in the best interests of the residents of Milwaukee.

Once the members of the Commission became aware of the provisions of Act 12, we unanimously and consistently opposed the draft legislation. We communicated our strong and united opposition on multiple occasions to the Mayor, the Common Council, the Governor and to the leaders of the State

legislature. None of this mattered. An institution that for over 135 years has provided the citizens of Milwaukee with an important measure of control over their own lives was reduced to a pawn in someone else's game. We simply cannot accept this.

2. We are resigning in order to call attention to Act 12's assault on self-government.

Our country was founded on the principle that every American has the fundamental right to participate in self-government. The State of Wisconsin amplifies and clarifies our right of self-government in the Home Rule provisions of the Wisconsin Constitution, which provide that decisions having a primarily local impact should be decided by local residents. Because Act 12 imposes policy changes and obligations on the City of Milwaukee, in ways that do not apply to any other municipal government in the state, the passage of Act 12 by the state legislature is an attack on this fundamental right of self-government.

The provisions of Act 12 that restrict the authority of the FPC are opposed by the Milwaukee Common Council and they are opposed by the vast majority of the residents of our city. However, Act 12 was pushed through the state legislature by legislators who do not have to answer to the voters of Milwaukee. Safe in their

gerrymandered districts, and representing a minority of the population of our state, these legislators were able to impose their choices on the majority of the voters in Wisconsin without fear of facing any consequences.

It is no answer to these criticisms to say that the Governor signed Act 12, and that some elected officials in Milwaukee voiced support for the overall legislation. By tying the reduction of the FPC's authority to an omnibus government funding bill, the proponents of Act 12 ensured that opposition to the legislation would threaten the financial future of the City of Milwaukee. As a result, significant policy changes were enacted into law without meaningful public input or debate.

Anyone who cares about democracy and self-government should be appalled at such legislative practices. This process of lawmaking is fundamentally wrong and it should not be normalized.

3. The new law significantly changes the job duties of a Commissioner.

By eliminating the exercise of direct control over the policies of the Police and Fire Departments, Act 12 creates a new job of Commissioner that is different from the job that both of us agreed to do. We agreed to accept a position with the City of Milwaukee that entailed a substantial time commitment and that, at times, subjected us to public criticism and second-guessing. However, we accepted this

challenge in large part because the position that was offered to us also included the opportunity to be agents of change in our community. Now that Act 12 has significantly altered the duties of Commissioner, we no longer feel obligated to continue serving in this very different role.

We wish to emphasize that there has never been any credible allegation that the members of the Commission have abused their policymaking authority. In fact, the FPC has approached its policymaking function in a responsible, deliberate and thoughtful manner. It is notable that the residents of the City of Milwaukee have strongly supported the policy reforms enacted by the Commission. It is unnecessary and unjust to take away a power that has been used wisely and that has benefited the people we serve.

In choosing to resign, the two of us understand and appreciate that the remainder of our colleagues on the Board of the FPC have made a different decision and that they will continue their service on the Board. We wish them the best. Each member of the Board of the Fire and Police Commission is feeling a different level of anger, disappointment and acceptance. We recognize that each Commissioner must make their own individual decision as to whether to continue their service going forward. We have made ours.

We would like to express our appreciation to our fellow Commissioners.

We would also like to thank Executive Director Leon Todd and the entire staff of the Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission. Our decision to resign is in no way connected to their excellent and loyal job performance on behalf of the FPC.

Executive Director Todd and the staff are outstanding public servants and it has been a pleasure to work with them.

We would also like to express our strong support and appreciation to Milwaukee Police Chief Jeffrey Norman and to Milwaukee Fire Chief Aaron Lipski. Our city is fortunate to have two such capable leaders. For the past two years, the policy of the FPC has been to act in partnership with our Chiefs, and to allow each Chief to do their job with a minimum of outside interference. By subjecting the heads of the Police and Fire Departments to second-guessing by politicians, the new Act 12 makes the job of our Chiefs harder, not easier. However, we have faith that Chiefs Norman and Lipski will continue to lead the Milwaukee Police and Fire Departments wisely.

Finally, by resigning our positions, effective tomorrow, we hope to send a message to voters across the entire State of Wisconsin. Demand that your elected officials support the right of self-government, not just for you in your own town

but for all of the residents of our State. Demand that your elected officials support policing policies that respect the constitutional rights shared by every resident of Wisconsin. And use your vote to support candidates who will defend civilian oversight over our police and fire departments.

For the foregoing reasons, we resign our positions on the Milwaukee Board of Police and Fire Commissioners as of 12:01 a.m. on Friday July 21, 2023.

Signed:

Commissioner Amanda Avalos

Commissioner Ed Fallon