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CITY OF MADISON MAYOR DAVID J. CIESLEWICZ COMMENTS ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

PRESENTED TO THE STATE OF WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL: SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION DECEMBER 19, 2006

Good evening, distinguished members of the Special Committee on Affirmative Action, news media, and the public. My name is Dave Cieslewicz, and I'm the Mayor of the City of Madison.

As a municipal corporation, the City of Madison has a proud history of providing its inhabitants equal access to employment, programs, and the benefits of contracting. The City strives to assure that it operates with an open hand and on a level playing field to secure the advantages of a diverse workforce and economy and to further its goal of being one of the best places to work and live in the country.

As an employer, the City strongly believes that there are benefits to employing a diverse workforce, one that reflects the multicultural nature of the City's population. These benefits derive from the differences in perspective and experience that those with differing values and experiences bring to their jobs. Tapping into the vast talent pool of Madison's population assists in bringing innovation and better service to the City's customers. Encouraging a diverse workforce reflective of those who use City services and programs makes the experience of dealing with government less intimidating and more open.

In furthering its goals of diversity and inclusion, the City encourages opening the net of access as widely as possible, as opposed to utilizing methods that promote one group over another on the basis of protected categories such as race or sex. This approach emphasizes hiring the most qualified applicant and relies upon open and active recruiting efforts to make certain that the pool of applicants is open to all segments of our population. This approach recognizes that not all individuals may have the same access to information and strives to reduce artificial barriers in the hiring process that may limit the applicant pool.

The City has a good record of recruitment and hiring a diverse workforce. Our efforts in the areas of recruitment, hiring, and promoting focus on education of managers and encouragement of a fair and open advancement process and do not rely upon creating artificial preferences.

As a dispenser of City funds and a distributor of funds from other state and federal programs, the City has a responsibility to spend those funds wisely and for the good of the City and its people. Such "good" includes not only sound economic use of these public funds, but assuring that those businesses receiving this money are working to make the City the best place it can be for all its residents.

In this regard, the City's efforts are substantially directed by the requirements of state and federal laws. The City does not have the luxury of determining which state or federal rules, laws, and regulations it likes and those it does not. Requirements of these funding authorities often drive the actions and decisions of the City in how it operates programs, purchases goods and services, or disperses contract funds. However, where the City does exercise its own authority, it endeavors to support all portions of the population through the economic carrot of its purse strings. The City works diligently to ensure that all those doing business with the City or seeking to do business with the City are provided with the information and support necessary to be successful. This support and education is made available to all regardless of protected characteristic. Outreach efforts are not limited to the "usual" outlets.

In choosing with whom the City will do business, it has an obligation to the public to insure that the City's contractors work to further the City's legitimate interests in a diverse and inclusive workforce while assuring that the best possible individuals are hired. The City's oversight of its contractors is intended to assure not just that the contractors exercise the same diligence as the City in recruitment of qualified individuals regardless of protected status, but that those hired receive the full protection of the law including receiving a living wage.

The City in furthering its goals to support local employees and employers is beginning to explore a "Buy Local" program that should allow the City to make certain that the residents of Madison receive the full benefit of the dollars it spends and to assure that the City's residents have the best opportunity to benefit from those expenditures. A key component in any such program must be the that City tax dollars do not go to businesses that promote or tolerate discrimination against any member of its workforce and that all individuals be given a full and fair opportunity to benefit from contracts with the City.

The City when it acts as an employer, a contractor or a purchaser of goods or services has an obligation to act in a non-discriminatory manner. In addition, it has the duty to see that all members of society have a fair and equal opportunity to benefit from the City's actions. In doing so, the City of Madison has chosen to reach out to attract the broadest possible workforce and pool of contractors and vendors to further the City's goal of promoting and benefiting from a diverse and pluralistic society.

Committee members, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to place this statement on the record at this hearing.

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