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Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley Applauds County Board Approval of Diverse Group to Lead Key County Departments

MILWAUKEE, WI – Yesterday, the Milwaukee County Board voted to approve Shakita LaGrant-McClain as the next Director of the Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), Cassandra Libal as Director of the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and Jeffery Roman as Director of Office on African-American Affairs (OAAA).

“A key focus area of our strategic plan to achieve racial equity is to move past the mistakes of the past that failed to assemble Milwaukee County leadership as a reflection of the people who make up the county. Historically, we’ve prioritized the perspectives of straight, white men when it comes to County leadership, but in order to achieve racial equity it is imperative that the leadership of Milwaukee County represents the make-up of the County.” said Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley. “A key focus area of our strategic plan to achieve racial equity is to move beyond Milwaukee County’s past failures to assemble a leadership team that reflects the people who make up the county.”

The County Board’s vote to confirm the appointments of LaGrant-McClain, Libal, and Roman take a step forward in the transformation of Milwaukee County Government towards racial equity. 46 percent of Milwaukee County department leaders will be women and over half of department heads will be African-American – up from 31 percent when County Executive Crowley was sworn-in in May.

The Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services is one of the largest departments at Milwaukee County with over 800 employees serving across several divisions. LaGrant-McClain has been with DHHS since 2013, where she served as the Program Coordinator for the Disability Resource Center, analyzing and developing policies for the department. In May of this year, Ms. LaGrant-McClain became Interim Director of Health and Human Services and Interim Director of the Department on Aging where she has focused on ensuring residents can access the services they need without running into barriers.

"Thank you to County Executive Crowley and the members of the County Board for confirming me as the next Director of DHHS. I am excited to continue the work towards achieving racial equity and making Milwaukee County the healthiest county in Wisconsin. DHHS remains committed to
bridging the gap in racial health disparities by making it easier to access services that meet the holistic needs of our residents,” said Shakita La-Grant McClain.

Cassandra Libal previously served more than 25 years with the Milwaukee Police Department, where she rose through the ranks, most notable serving as Captain and Commander of the Office of Community Outreach and Education.

As a Lieutenant of Police, she served as the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Coordinator, where she oversaw the Department’s specialized training in officer’s wellness, mental health awareness, and de-escalation. She also oversaw the Crisis Assessment Response Team and served as the Homeless Outreach Team Coordinator. Libal has worked tirelessly to build positive relationships with community partners such as 100 Black Women—Milwaukee, Milwaukee Downtown BID 21, and the National Alliance on Mental Illness—Greater Milwaukee, all of which have formally recognized her hard work and dedication.

“I am extremely grateful for County Executive David Crowley’s support and the Milwaukee County Board’s advancement of my appointment to lead OEM at this critical time. I look forward to working with our capable, confident, and talented team here at OEM to continue to navigate the public health crisis and keep county residents safe,” said Cassandra Libal.

Jeffrey Roman is a Milwaukee native who has extensive experience mobilizing and supporting equity-based and community-centered programs, policy advocacy and collective impact initiatives. He has a long track record of working with grassroots, philanthropy, nonprofits and the public sector, as well as diverse groups of Milwaukee residents. Roman was also a two-term commissioner and past chair of the Milwaukee Equal Rights Commission; executive director of the nonprofit Urban Roots Milwaukee; benchmark coordinator and program officer for the Milwaukee County Brighter Futures and Milwaukee Minority Male Achievement Program; and equal opportunity coordinator at the Community Advocates Public Policy Institute. He is a member of the Campaign for Black Male Achievement, National Black Child Development Institute and Center for Black Equity. Roman is also a founding member and board member of BYP 100, a national member-based and direct-action organization that mobilizes and trains Black youth, activists, scholars, innovators and policy makers ages 18-35.

Roman takes the place of Nicole Brookshire, who was appointed by County Executive Chris Abele in 2017 as OAAA’s founding executive director.

"Thank you to County Executive Crowley and the entire Board of Supervisors for their unanimous confirmation of my appointment. I am excited to continue serving my hometown by leading the work of the Milwaukee County Office on African American Affairs as we advance the vision of being the healthiest county in Wisconsin. We’ll achieve that vision by strategically positioning our office
throughout the region to be a convener, connector and a collaborator so race is no longer a predictor of health and quality of life outcomes,” said Jeffrey Roman.

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