

Milwaukee Rally for Unity and Pride, June 11, 2017

**Statement from William R. Tisdale, President and CEO,
Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council**



Good morning!

I am so glad to be here with you today, as we celebrate Pride in inclusive, joyful community with one another.

As many of you know, Wisconsin has been a groundbreaker in fair housing rights; we can be proud that in 1982, our state became the very first in the nation to make it illegal to discriminate in the housing market based on sexual orientation. Home is so very important because it's where we build our families, our dreams and our lives... where we feel safe. No one should be prevented from finding and keeping that home because of who they love.

Let's make sure ALL of us have these rights! When any member of our community is denied the right to live where they wish, they are often cut off from employment opportunities, educational opportunities, and the chance to live in integrated neighborhoods. Housing discrimination marginalizes and shrinks the lives of those it affects most directly. But make no mistake – housing discrimination hurts everyone. Discrimination separates us, and deprives us all from living in diverse, inclusive, truly integrated neighborhoods. We are all poorer because of it. We all pay the costs of unfair housing practices.

There are four things we can do together to expand housing rights, and I call on all of us to work on these hand-in-hand:

First: we can partner with organizations that work on equality from many different angles. All oppressions are related, and must be tackled holistically. And, in our diverse world, oppressions are often experienced together: A Latino gay man may face discrimination based on his sexual orientation AND his national origin. A black transgender woman may be unlawfully denied her rights because of race AND gender identity. A lesbian who uses a wheelchair may be denied housing opportunities because of her disability, as well as her sexual orientation. Oppression can be experienced in multiple ways, and we must expand our understanding of that, by working across community lines.

Second: In many other states, it is NOT illegal to deny housing to gay and lesbian homeseekers based on their sexual orientation. We must call on our federal government to expand this fair housing protection across the country, so that a gay man in Texas has the same rights as a gay man in Wisconsin, and a lesbian in Mobile has the same rights as a lesbian in Milwaukee.

Third: Only a handful of Wisconsin communities prohibit housing discrimination based on gender identity and expression. We must call on our leaders to expand our state and federal laws so that our transgender neighbors are protected comprehensively.

And finally: We must urge our law enforcement and justice systems to take hate crimes and bias-motivated harassment seriously. Hate crimes and harassment often happen in one's home – the very place where we should be safest. Those who wield their hate as a weapon must be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

As we rally today in pride and in unity, we must continue to work toward a common purpose, with no one left behind: housing rights for all!

Thank you!