



# DANE COUNTY

Joe Parisi  
County Executive

March 20, 2015

Dear Municipal Leader:

Together, we have much to be proud of.

The dozens of communities and neighborhoods that comprise our great county define our character and shared accomplishments.

Businesses, jobs, and people are coming here faster than anywhere else in the state.

56.9% of Wisconsin's private sector job growth between 2003 and 2013 happened in one of our state's 72 counties – right here in Dane County. We added 20,000 new jobs here in that decade - three times more than the next closest county.

Our unemployment rate remains the lowest in the state. 70% of Wisconsin's net population growth between 2008 and 2012 happened here. The state added 28,000 new residents in those years. 20,000 of them were in Dane County alone.

While our accomplishments distinguish us, we need to be cognoscente of our challenges and approach them with a shared willingness to address them.

Such an opportunity exists to confront the effects of poverty in our county.

It's incumbent upon all of us to govern in a way that ensures everyone who decides to call this amazing county 'home' has opportunity - - opportunity to work, thrive, and live. We all have a part to do.

I recently announced a series of efforts that all of us - local governments, non-profits, businesses, the faith community – can take to break down barriers to success.

The goal is simple: reduce the number of kids and families living in poverty in all of our neighborhoods.

As fellow local officials, I respectfully ask you consider joining county government in:

\*Reviewing local ordinances to evaluate the penalties for non-violent citations and evaluate their impact on those who live in poverty. Left unpaid by a young person from an impoverished family, these municipal citations escalate in time, becoming barriers to employment. They can prevent young people from getting a driver's license or result in a license suspension. Non-violent, often one-time offenses are unnecessarily setting people back, forcing individuals to play from behind or "catch-up" to their peers. We want to encourage teens to get a job and begin their professional development early on – a path that maximizes opportunity and leads to life long professional and personal successes.

\*Modifying current hiring practices to ensure those who make a mistake earlier in life and have since made amends to society, have opportunities to serve their communities. This is commonly referred to as "banning the box" and is intended to prevent employers from discriminating solely based on acts that occurred many years previously. Certainly some positions require more careful screening and background checks, but hiring processes can account for this reality without automatically disqualifying individuals for every position right from the initial application.

\*Voluntarily monitoring law enforcement traffic stop data to assess trends. The Dane County Sheriff's Office and Madison Police Department are both committed to this effort. While the state no longer requires this be done, law enforcement agencies that do this are better able to assess who they're coming into contact with, offering opportunities for improved policing and even safer neighborhoods.

Reducing the prevalence of poverty is a shared challenge that together we can solve through bold leadership.

I invite you to learn more about "Access to Opportunity" at my new website:  
[opportunity@countyofdane.com](mailto:opportunity@countyofdane.com)

I appreciate your willingness to address this collaboratively and for the work you do for the citizens of Dane County every day.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Parisi".

Joe Parisi  
Dane County Executive