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Zero Youth Corrections Action Committee Announces Grants to Two Milwaukee Organizations through Groundbreaking Participatory Budgeting Process

Paradigm Shyft, Your MOVE MKE Working on Innovative Youth Justice Ideas

MILWAUKEE, WI - The Zero Youth Corrections Actions Committee announced a combined $396,000 in funding for two local organizations – Paradigm Shyft and Your MOVE MKE – for work on projects that prevent young people from being impacted or recidivated into the criminal legal system.

The funding announcements directly result from Milwaukee County's first participatory budgeting process, an emerging practice that gives community members input into decision-making and budgeting processes.

“Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is proud to be a partner in this collaborative participatory budgeting process. Over 300 community members said what was needed to keep youth out of the carceral system and the two projects were decided by a committee of community members. These recipients are grassroots programs that directly impact youth at risk of going into the system and those returning home from the system. We are honored to support their work!” said David Muhammad, Deputy Director, Milwaukee County’s Department of Health & Human Services.

The Milwaukee County Zero Youth Action Committee met with hundreds of county residents through a series of forums, including seven public sessions with youth, activists, community leaders, and impacted families, and two meetings with youth currently incarcerated at the Vel R. Phillips Youth and Family Justice Center.

The Milwaukee County Zero Youth Corrections Action Committee members created funding guidelines based on community input to identify local organizations that are best suited to prevent young people from becoming impacted by the criminal legal system.

“The best ideas bubble up from communities. That’s why Public Welfare Foundation is excited about the approach Zero Youth Corrections is taking to fund programs and develop partnerships,” said Public Welfare Foundation President Candice C. Jones. “Community-rooted organizations...
like Paradigm Shyft and Your MOVE MKE are developing promising solutions to help young people stay out of the carceral system – it’s time to give them the investments they need instead of pouring more resources into bricks and mortar investments.”

Wisconsin's criminal legal system disproportionately impacts black, Brown, Immigrant, and Indigenous youth. The ZYC wants to see that change in Milwaukee and is building processes for the community to lead the work of reimagining youth justice. The funding will be used to help create innovative solutions to prevent young people from being impacted by Wisconsin's criminal legal system, including interactions with law enforcement and the mass incarceration system.

Emilio De Torre, Executive Director of the Milwaukee Turners, noted, "The opportunity to work collaboratively with hundreds of other Milwaukeeans on solutions to youth incarceration was incredibly rewarding. We are eager to learn from and continue this process in the future, and uplift it as a model for replication nationally."

The Zero Youth Corrections Action Committee is made up of representatives from Milwaukee County’s Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) Children, Youth & Family Services, the Milwaukee Turners, and Public Welfare Foundation.

The total amount of funding being awarded this cycle is $396,000. In perspective, $400,000 is the current cost to keep one young person for one year at the Department of Juvenile Corrections. The Zero Youth Corrections Committee acknowledges that $400,000 is a fraction of the investment that needs to be made in order to create systemic change in youth justice and reduce racially disparate impacts. By partnering on this first step, the Committee hopes to promote increased funding for local youth programming and catalyze investment from system and community partners.

Learn more about this grant at milwaukeeturners.org/zyc

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More information about the two groups being funded:

Paradigm Shyft - Will receive $200,000 to work with both Milwaukee BIPOC youth in particular to prevent interaction with the criminal punishment system, and those that are identified early on after interacting with the system or are arrested for a crime that does not mandate a long prison sentence – with a focus on gun possession.

Your MOVE MKE - Will receive $196,000 to support programs designed to assist in breaking the cycles of poverty, trauma and prevent youth from becoming impacted by the criminal justice system; replacing them with positive cycles of prosperity, strength and healing through hip-hop and art to teach youth and young adults critical thinking and life skills.