



CITY OF MADISON POLICE DEPARTMENT



INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: December 7, 2022

TO: Police and Fire Commission

FROM: Timothy Patton, Captain of Police

SUBJECT: **Proposed Change to Police Hiring Process**

Commissioners,

The Madison Police Department Hiring Process currently includes a credit check at the background investigation phase of the process. MPD requests your consideration to exclude this component of the hiring process beginning in 2023.

Currently, for candidates who advance to the background investigation step, MPD Program Assistant Deb Slawek conducts a credit check through a third-party provider. MPD paid service fees in 2022 for this service in the amount of \$701.88. The resulting report provides the candidate's credit history that can provide insight into a candidate's handling of consumer debt to include credit card debt, mortgage and car payments, student and other loans, child support and late payments. Employers routinely utilize credit reports as an indicator of how candidates handle responsibilities and the extent to which they may be in financial distress. In our case, these reports are not being used in any meaningful way. In the limited cases where the reports have proved actionable, the history revealed a history of unpaid child support that served to inform the direction of the background investigation in some way.

Besides the cost savings and minimal value of these reports, we wish to remove this step of the process due to the potential for it serving as an unintentional barrier for potential applicants, with special emphasis on multicultural candidates. Per our research, multicultural populations have disproportionately lower credit scores due to discriminatory practices that are rooted in systems of institutionalized racism. While some might argue that people need to just "work hard" and be responsible, many people of color struggle in part due to disproportionate incomes and opportunities. The impact of credit checks therefore, potentially present a disparate negative impact on multicultural candidates. Additionally, knowledge of the use of these reports may prevent candidates from entering our hiring process in the first place. Research shows that men apply for a job when they meet 60% of the qualifications, but women apply only if they meet 100% of them (*Kay & Shipman, 2018*). Candidates with lower credit scores or varied credit histories may assume they will be excluded and therefore not apply.

The Madison Police Department is committed to eliminating any barrier to our application process that may serve to prevent us from meeting a qualified candidate. We therefore, respectfully request that the credit history part of our application process be removed from our hiring process.