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## **MARCUS CENTER RELEASES ACTION PLAN FOR RACIAL EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

*Marcus Center reaffirms its commitment to engaging diverse communities and developing programming that reflects the Milwaukee community*

**MILWAUKEE** – Strengthening its commitment to racial equity, diversity and inclusion (REDI) on and off the stage, Marcus Performing Arts Center released its REDI Action Plan to create a more racially representative and equitable culture at the Marcus Center. Focusing on building bridges between diverse members of the community through high-quality arts and entertainment that reflects the Milwaukee community, Marcus Center announced REDI goals in three key areas, including Representation, Inclusion and Investment.

The Marcus Center has been committed to REDI efforts for more than 17 years including the establishment of a Director of Community Engagement and Inclusion position in 2003. During the past nine months the organization spent time listening, learning and sharing, both inside and outside of the organization to create a strategic plan for REDI growth that is specific and measurable.

“We recognize that the process toward racial equity, diversity and inclusion is a marathon and not a sprint, and it’s our mission as an organization to always be thinking, acting and listening with a REDI lens,” said Marcus Center President and CEO Kendra Whitlock Ingram. “Creating and sharing these goals publicly is just another step to strengthen our commitment, and we look forward to tracking and reporting on our progress toward these goals regularly so the community can help hold us accountable.”

Marcus Performing Arts Center announced REDI goals in three key areas:

**REPRESENTATION** of artists, leadership, board, staff and volunteer members who reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of Milwaukee County, with action steps including:

- Achieve 50% BIPOC board membership by 2025 (currently 35%);
- Recruit, hire, and retain 40% BIPOC management by 2028 (currently 25%);
- Commit a minimum of 30% of Marcus Center Presents annual programming to the presentation of nationally and internationally celebrated BIPOC artists; and
- Increase racial and age diversity of volunteers to 30% BIPOC and 30% under age 50 by 2025.

**INCLUSION**-focused culture centered on creating, sustaining and promoting an environment of belonging across the organization, with action steps including:

- Build process for inclusion-based decision making across the organization;
- Implement regular and consistent collection of audience perceptions;
- Continue to develop community-based programming that enhances sense of belonging; and
- Create a comprehensive communication plan.

**INVESTMENT** financially in REDI initiatives across the organization, with action steps including:

- Increase investment in minority, veteran, and women-owned suppliers and vendors;
- Establish annual budget for on-going REDI education for staff, volunteers, and board;
- Commission the creation of at least one new artistic work by a BIPOC artist annually; and
- Invest in new community access programs that remove barriers to participation.

“These short-term 12-month and long-term 3-year goals keep us focused on intentional actions to engage diverse communities and develop programming that fully reflects the Milwaukee community,” said Laura Gough, Marcus Center

Board Chair and REDI Task Force Member. “The strategic decision to not only evaluate the Marcus Center’s current REDI initiatives and practices, but also deepen our REDI commitment across the organization was fully embraced by our board, management team, staff and community advocates.”

The REDI Action Plan and goals were established through a collaborative process with community partner P3 Development. The organization convened a REDI Task Force, including 12 board and key staff members, to work with P3 on the effort. The group first reviewed research conducted prior to the development of the Marcus Center campus which examined community perceptions and provided recommendations for the organization. The REDI Taskforce assessed where the organization stands today against those recommendations and then developed new goals for the future.

“We recognize there are enormous societal issues surrounding systemic racism, and that our area of influence remains specifically focused on the live performing arts industry and those areas that we can most directly impact,” said Ray Wilson, Marcus Center Board Chair Elect.

Whitlock Ingram shared, “This is a journey for our organization and the community. We’ve begun intentional education efforts for our staff, including supporting those who are participating in YWCA Anti Racism Training, and setting aside time at staff meetings to discuss REDI initiatives to ensure our entire team is informed, understands essential REDI topics, and is using common language across the organization.”

The Marcus Center’s first update regarding progress on REDI goals will come later this spring - with the announcement of new diverse programming coming to the stage this summer and fall. For more information on the REDI Action Plan, Task Force and regular progress updates, visit [MarcusCenter.org/REDI](https://www.MarcusCenter.org/REDI)

### **About Marcus Performing Arts Center**

Established in 1969, the Marcus Performing Arts Center is the premier performing arts community gathering space in Southeastern Wisconsin. As the Marcus Center celebrates its 50th anniversary, it continues to build bridges between diverse members of our community through high-quality arts entertainment in the region and the state. The touring Broadway series, sponsored by Johnson Financial Group, is recognized as bringing the best of Broadway entertainment to Milwaukee for the past 20 years and provides opportunities to educate, entertain and engage audiences. The Marcus Center is also the home to the Milwaukee Symphony, Milwaukee Ballet, Florentine Opera, First Stage plus a variety of other important community and family events throughout the year. For more information about events visit the Marcus Center website at [www.MarcusCenter.org](https://www.MarcusCenter.org). The Marcus Center is a private non-profit 501(c) 3 corporation and is a dedicated veterans memorial in Milwaukee.

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