



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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January 9, 2020
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rep. Goyke & Sen. Taylor Introduce “The Wisconsin Corrections Reform & Reinvestment Initiative”

Reform-Report-Reinvest

MADISON — Today Rep. Evan Goyke (D-Milwaukee) and Sen. Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee) introduced “The Wisconsin Corrections Reform & Reinvestment Initiative.” The reforms address non-criminal revocations; Wisconsin’s earned release system; and changes to community supervision.

Criminal justice reform has become a national, bi-partisan issue, with both federal and state-led initiatives in approximately 45 states to address rising prison populations, costs, and to avoid the massive costs of constructing new prison facilities, while also maintaining public safety. Today, Wisconsin faces the reality of a growing prison population and a similar future of needing to build a new prison unless reforms are made. We make the case for reform.

In the 2019-2021 budget, the Legislature approved a 5% increase in the Department of Corrections budget, with an annual budget now above \$1.3 Billion. Included in the budget was an estimate that the prison population will grow roughly 600 additional inmates by 2021, to over 24,300 inmates, an all-time high in Wisconsin.

“Today I am introducing a package of bills to reform our justice system, built from the experiences of other states, to safely reduce the prison population and reinvest the savings to reduce crime,” stated Rep. Goyke.

“Each bill follows the same framework: Reform-Report-Reinvest. Each bill includes statutory reforms to safely reduce the prison population, increased reporting and data collection, and the reinvestment of savings into proven recidivism reducing programming.”

“Building a new prison may cost more than \$300 million with an ongoing annual cost of anywhere from \$20 million to \$40 million depending on the capacity and level of security,” commented Sen. Taylor.

“On top of the mounting fiscal costs are the broader costs to our community. Wisconsin’s criminal justice system has among America’s worst disparities for people of color. This is a moral, civil rights issue that must be addressed. African American men in Wisconsin are several times more likely to be incarcerated for non-violent offenses than their white neighbors. African Americans make up roughly 6.6% of the state’s population, yet over 42% of Wisconsin’s prison population. Similar disparities are found in the incarceration rates of Hispanic, Southeast Asian, and American Indian populations of Wisconsin.”

The pieces of legislation are currently circulating for co-sponsorship.

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