



Carol Roessler

STATE SENATOR

August 28, 2007

Senator Scott Fitzgerald
202 South, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Senator Fitzgerald:

I am writing to call your attention to several provisions in the budget that would be detrimental to the retention and recruitment of quality state employees. For ease of conveying the components I am most opposed to, I have bulleted these budget proposals below:

- oppose reductions in the compensation reserve funding level approved by the Joint Finance Committee;
- oppose contracting out for Corrections health care services;
- oppose elimination of 50 new correctional officer positions; and
- oppose deleting 40 unit manager positions.

Adequate compensation funding provides for state employee pay, but also provides for market adjustments that need to be made for positions that are in high demand and where private salaries are outpacing state position pay for similar or same work responsibility. These disparities will be exacerbated in the future as we face further challenges of increased worker shortages.

In addition, I think it is inappropriate to consider contracting out for Corrections health care services given the state's previous experience on this issue as well as the newest information that we learn about other states problems with contracting out health care positions to a private company.

Wisconsin privately contracted for health care services previously at four institutions. None of these prisons are currently using private contractors for these services. There is a Legislative Fiscal Bureau paper from September 2002 that outlines staffing requests by DOC for Redgranite, Supermax, Prairie du Chien and the Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility following the dissolve of these private contracts.

In addition there is a September 2004 memo that outlines concerns raised by Sharon Zunker Director of the Bureau of Health Services at DOC. Ms. Zunker's memo outlines numerous problems with these private contracts. Ms. Zunker raises concerns with the private contractors' inability to retain and recruit staff; constant renegotiation with vendors requesting DOC to assume costs of high risk care; requests for additional funding after contracts were signed; and contractors not paying their bills locally for services. Our previous experience contracting out has documented problems with Prison Health Services, EMSA Health Care, and Correctional Medical Services.

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I held a hearing on the previous budget proposal to contract out health services programs in the Senate Health committee on February 17, 2005. The Department of Corrections was unable to provide the committee with a cost benefit analysis of using existing state health service staff and pharmaceutical needs vs. contracting out for these services; a backup provision of care if a contracted provider fails to provide services per the contract agreement; and names of any potential private contract bidders.

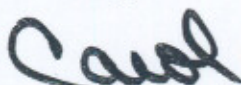
Several New York Times articles highlight concerns with privatizing health care services in state correctional institutions. One article is titled "Private Health Care in Jails Can Be a Death Sentence." In this article the New York Times reviewed medical flaws and found a private contractor for correctional health care services has paid millions in fines and settlements for inadequate or flawed medical care. These New York Times article findings of inadequate or inappropriate health care services by a contracted organization should cause serious concern in Wisconsin as we review this current proposal to contract out these services.

My recommendation is to continue drawing on the professional expertise of our current state employees who provide health care in these institutions to continue to find cost savings internally. As an example, the Dodge Correctional Central Pharmacy has instituted several cost savings measures they have put in place to be more efficient and save the taxpayer dollars. The Dodge Central Pharmacy has reduced costs by implementing use of half-tablets (\$1 million savings), deblistering program that returns unused psychotropic medications to the system (\$241,000 savings), and wider application of return policy (\$523,000 savings). This staff is renowned for researching and applying continual cost saving measures.

Eliminating unit manager positions resurfaces numerous budget cycles and is vetoed by the Governor every time. Because the Governor is unable to fully veto back these unit manager positions in the budget, the reduction of unit manager positions often results in a reduction of front-line correctional staff. Adequate front-line correctional officer positions are imperative with our severe overcrowding of prisons. Inmates are currently sleeping on floors and other areas not designated for inmates and thus we are exposing ourselves to greater jeopardy for the safety of staff and inmates.

Again, I strongly urge you to get rid of the budget initiatives outlined in my bullet points on the first page of this letter. Thank you for your attention to these concerns as you review and negotiate budget initiatives in the Conference Committee.

Sincerely,



CAROL ROESSLER
State Senator
18th Senate District