

Sen. Taylor: Milwaukee Democrats introduce juvenile justice bill of rights act

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(MADISON) – Last Friday, a federal judge affirmed what Wisconsin parents and community members have already known – the excessive use of pepper spray, restraints, and solitary confinement on the juvenile residents of Lincoln Hills is unacceptable.

All three legislators expressed outrage at the practices used at Lincoln Hills. Representative Leon Young (D- Milwaukee) called the punishments disgusting and the elimination of solitary confinement an “essential step towards ensuring that those juveniles can eventually become healthy and productive members of society.”

Representative David Crowley (D-Milwaukee) added, “We as a state cannot continue to throw money into a system that does nothing but victimize and institutionalize our young people.”

Senator Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee), who began visiting Lincoln Hills in 2016 following the bombshell claims of widespread abuse, stated, “The idea that corrections officers pepper sprayed teens at the facility nearly 220 times in 2016 is simply unacceptable when dealing with juveniles, particularly when the practice has

been outlawed in other states.”

Due to the large percentage of Milwaukee youth at the center, the three Milwaukee legislators praised Judge Peterson’s ruling and vowed immediate action to address these abuses.

On Friday, Senator Lena Taylor, Representative Leon Young, and Representative David Crowley unveiled the Juvenile Justice Bill of Rights package. This package, if passed, would:

- ban juvenile solitary confinement,
- transfer juvenile corrections to the Department of Children and Families,
- ensure only trained medical personnel may administer medication to juveniles, and
- allow Milwaukee County to license its own juvenile corrections facility.

Following the introduction of the package, Representative Crowley said, “The amount of trauma experienced by the young people in Lincoln Hills must come to a halt and these bills are the beginning to that end.”

Senator Taylor, frustrated with Governor Walker’s unwillingness to address the crisis at Lincoln Hills, added, “It’s clear the Governor has no interest to act, so the Legislature had to take matters into its own hands.”