

ACLU: State Assembly proposal to borrow \$350 million for new prison dies in Wisconsin Senate

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MILWAUKEE — After an Assembly proposal to borrow \$350 million for a new prison in Wisconsin touched off an intense reaction from a coalition of more than 50 organizations, led by the ACLU of Wisconsin and WISDOM, the Wisconsin Senate yesterday refused to pass Senate Bill 54, which would have funded the controversial new facility.

“For years, state legislators have been passing bills that create more penalties for more offenses, and make it easier to revoke people under community supervision to prison,” said Molly Collins, deputy director of the ACLU of Wisconsin. “We are heartened that the state senate has not signed off on the Assembly plan to borrow \$350 million to build a new prison and continue this harmful trend.”

Wisconsin spent \$1.2 billion on corrections services in 2017—more tax dollars than the state spent on almost any other purpose. According to the Wisconsin Budget Project, Wisconsin spends more on corrections (per capita) than the national average, and more than our neighboring states of Michigan, Illinois, Minnesota, and Iowa, because we incarcerate a larger share of our population than they do.

“The bottom line is that our state is incarcerating too many people for too long. It’s expensive, it damages our communities and families, and it doesn’t make our neighborhoods safer. We need to immediately adopt smarter reforms,” Collins said.

“We hope that the next session will feature a complete review of the criminal justice system, focused on ways to safely and responsibly reduce Wisconsin’s prison population,” said David Liners, WISDOM’s executive director.

Members of the coalition are:

ACLU of Wisconsin, African-American Civic Engagement Roundtable, Black Leaders Organizing for Communities (BLOC), Black Lives Matter to Wisconsin Unitarian Universalists, Dane County’s Derail the Jail Coalition, The Demeter Foundation, The Dominican Center, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, EXPO (EX-incarcerated People Organizing), FCAB (Felmers Chaney Advocacy Board), Free The 350 Bail Fund in Dane County, GenderQueer Milwaukee, Grassroots Northshore, JOSHUA, JustLeadershipUSA, Kids Forward, Law Enforcement Action Partnership, Leaders Igniting Transformation (LIT), Madison Chapter National Lawyers Guild, Madison-area Urban Ministry, MICAHA (Milwaukee Inner City Congregations Allied for Hope), Milwaukee Muslim Women’s Coalition, Milwaukee National Lawyers Guild, Milwaukee Turners’ Confronting Mass Incarceration, NAACP Milwaukee Branch, National Association of Social Workers – Wisconsin, Operation Welcome Home (OWH), Our Democracy 2020, Our Revolution, Parents for Public Schools Milwaukee, People’s Progressive Organizing Committee, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Wisconsin, Priceless Incite, Prison Action Milwaukee, Progressive Baptist Church, Rid Racism Milwaukee, Schools and Communities United, Showing Up for Racial Justice – Milwaukee, SOPHIA, Uplifting Black Liberation and Community (UBLAC), Voces de la Frontera, Wisconsin Council of Churches, Wisconsin Justice Initiative, Wisconsin Network for Peace Justice and Sustainability (WNPJS), Wisconsin Poor People’s Campaign, Wisconsin Transgender Health Coalition, Wisconsin Unitarian Universalist State Action Network, Wisconsin Voices, WISDOM, and Youth Justice Milwaukee, YWCA of Southeastern Wisconsin, and 9 to 5 Wisconsin.

This statement is online here: <http://aclu-wi.org/story/state-assembly-proposal-borrow-350-million-new-prison-dies-senate>