

# **Just Leadership USA: Statement on Wisconsin Assembly advancing Governor Walker's destructive criminal justice proposals**

Posted on Friday, Feb 23, 2018

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Press Release

For Immediate Release

February 23, 2018

Contact:

Mark Rice

JustLeadershipUSA/EXPO (EX-incarcerated People Organizing)

[608-843-0171](tel:608-843-0171)

[ricemark@gmail.com](mailto:ricemark@gmail.com)

## **STATEMENT FROM JUSTLEADERSHIPUSA ON WISCONSIN ASSEMBLY ADVANCING GOVERNOR WALKER'S**

### **DESTRUCTIVE CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROPOSALS**

**As a national advocacy organization that is centered on the voices and experiences of directly impacted people and that is dedicated to cutting**

**the correctional population in the United States in #halfby2030, JustLeadershipUSA strongly condemns the destructive criminal justice proposals being advanced by the Wisconsin State Assembly at the urging of Governor Scott Walker.**

**The archaic proposals will further Wisconsin's reliance on incarceration by advancing harsher sentencing; doubling-down on broken probation and parole practices; converting a severely troubled youth facility into an adult prison and building new youth prisons; and constructing a new, \$350 million adult prison. These proposed 'reforms' are based on an outdated and misguided approach to public safety that led to the United States being the most incarcerated nation in the world, and that has been widely rejected over the past decade because of the damage it inflicts on communities at the expense of long-term safety.**

**The Wisconsin State Senate will soon have an opportunity to do what directly impacted people and communities demand and what everyone in Wisconsin deserves: stop these destructive proposals by voting them down.**

**Multiple studies and reports, as well as the experiences of those who have been directly impacted by our criminal justice system, make clear that we need to shrink the size and the stigma-laden footprint of our criminal justice system. This requires drastically reducing the number of jails and prisons in this country. The values of fairness and justice require us to take the money we waste on our criminal justice system and invest that money, instead, into our communities.**

“The Wisconsin State Assembly is investing in backwards policies that will now go for Senate review. Implementing harsher sentencing, combined with a doubling-down on destructive probation and parole systems, will ensure that the state's criminal justice system continues to target the most vulnerable communities with expanded weapons of mass oppression. Governor Walker's new prison plan is consistent with his decades-long 'tough on crime' approach which has led to locking up more people for longer sentences in his own state. As a member of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), Walker was key in ushering in the devastating [Truth In Sentencing](#) law which is projected to cost Wisconsin taxpayers [\\$1.8 billion](#). Any plan that prioritizes prison construction will further the rampant harms of our nation's mass incarceration crisis and will damage

communities for generations to come. We will not accept this backwards and outdated concept of the justice system. We envision an approach to justice that prioritizes investing in communities and is guided by redemption and healing.”

- **Brent J. Cohen**, *Interim CEO and Vice President of JustLeadershipUSA*

“Today, the Wisconsin State Legislature and Governor Walker moved forward with a plan for the state of Wisconsin to waste \$350 million in valuable taxpayer dollars to build a new prison. This decision means that Wisconsin will continue the destructive practice of prioritizing punishment and dehumanization over people, families and community health. Incarceration and criminalization have never actually addressed real concerns of public safety or trauma. More money in a failed system is senseless. True commitment to the values of safety, equity and justice requires investment in solutions that are not entrenched in a system of targeted punishment. We cannot support a bureaucracy that creates and perpetuates the sick and cyclical crisis of incarceration. JustLeadershipUSA and directly impacted communities will continue to boldly demand overhaul of these harmful policies and fight against expansion of our failed criminal justice system.” - **Lex Stepling**, *Lead National Organizer for JustLeadershipUSA*

“We launched the #CLOSEmsdf Campaign because we know that what the Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility (MSDF) represents is diametrically opposed to our shared values. Conditions are deplorable, the brutality knows no bounds, and the facility only exists to lock up people who are struggling with poverty, mental illness, addiction, and issues related to Wisconsin’s unjust community supervision system. The principles underlying the #CLOSEmsdf Campaign also shape our firm view that we cannot continue building incarceration facilities that will only recreate the problems that we’re seeing every day at MSDF. Governor Walker’s ‘tough on crime’ mindset really just means he’s tough on communities. The money he’s wasting on building cages for our brothers and sisters should instead be invested into them and their neighborhoods. Enough is enough. Prisons are nothing more than concrete coffins where our hopes and dreams are laid to rest. We forcefully oppose this plan and we will work to stop it.” - **Mark Rice**, *#CLOSEmsdf Campaign Founder and EXPO of Wisconsin Statewide Organizer*