

# Rep. Brooks: Assembly Republicans reform correctional system

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Madison, WI—This week, the Wisconsin State Assembly approved a legislative package which significantly reforms and modernizes the state's correctional system.

Assembly Bill 953 establishes framework for smaller, regional Secure Residential Care Centers for Children and Youth (SRCCCYs) facilities to house youths currently residing at Lincoln Hills and Copper Lakes. In January, Governor Walker announced plans to repurpose Lincoln Hills and Copper Lakes by July 2020. Under the legislation, counties may establish SRCCCYs, partner with other counties to start SRCCCYs, or contract with another county or consortium to place juveniles under their supervision. The bill provides \$40 million for sum sufficient grants of 95% of the construction costs for SRCCCYs.

"I am pleased with the decision to remove youth from Lincoln Hills and Copper Lakes and relocate them to local facilities. The research is clear - smaller, local approaches to juvenile corrections are more effective in reducing recidivism than traditional models. This approach will improve public safety and keep these children close to their families" said Representative Rob Brooks.

Senate Bill 54 addresses prosecutor shortages throughout the state and funds 53.75 additional assistant district attorney positions in 40 counties. Ozaukee and Washington County will each receive one new ADA position beginning in July 2019.

"I am deeply grateful to the Wisconsin Assembly for their contribution to public safety. This infusion of resources will immediately translate to increased public

safety and better services to the victims we serve. Our state prosecution resources really haven't increased for the last 25 years. With these new positions our response time will significantly improve, law enforcement will see better assistance with their investigations, and even the defendants will benefit from prosecutors who have more time to better understand the character and needs of the people they prosecute. Today, in the midst of perhaps the greatest drug epidemic in history, this assistance from our legislators is greatly appreciated," stated Ozaukee County District Attorney Adam Gerol.

On the addition of an ADA in his county, Washington County District Attorney Mark Bensen stated, "I appreciate the Wisconsin Assembly's attention to the strained resources of district attorneys' offices across the state. The Washington County District Attorney's Office experienced a thirty percent increase in felony cases filed in 2017, which is in part a reflection of the opioid crisis and drug-related crime. New positions will directly impact the limited resources of this office to improve services provided to victims, law enforcement, and the community at large. I am also optimistic that the legislature will continue its commitment to public safety by funding pay progression for existing prosecutors as public safety is also contingent on the ability to retain experienced prosecutors across the state. The complexity of the opioid crisis necessitates that the state retain skilled and experienced prosecutors."

Senate Bill 53 reforms the expungement process. Currently, at the time of sentencing, a court may order that a person's record be expunged when the sentence is completed. Senate Bill 53 eliminates the requirement for the sentencing court to rule on expungement and allows a person to petition the court for expungement after completing his or her sentence and do not commit another crime for at least one year. In addition, this legislation applies retroactively to those who previously committed a non-violent crime. These reforms are meant to help those trapped on the sidelines who have not been able to obtain employment due to one poor decision.

"This legislation is common sense, as it incentivizes people to cooperate with the parole agents and regulations, as an avenue for potential expungement. This type of criminal justice modernization and reform is exactly what Wisconsin needs," said Representative Rob Brooks.