

Sen. Shilling: Calls for action in wake of Sterling Brown arrest

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MILWAUKEE, WI – With the release of video footage from the Sterling Brown arrest, Senate Democratic Leader Jennifer Shilling (D-La Crosse) is renewing her call for state officials to address Wisconsin’s problems with racial profiling and disparities in the criminal justice system. For years, Wisconsin has struggled with one of the highest incarceration rates for African American men in the nation.

“The racial inequities that continue to plague our criminal justice system have devastated families and communities of color for too long,” said Sen. Shilling. “Rather than acknowledging this crisis and working toward solutions, President Trump and Republican leaders here in Wisconsin have ignored the issue of racial profiling and contributed to an escalation in racial tension.”

In an effort to combat racial profiling and address disparities in Wisconsin’s criminal justice system, Democrats passed legislation in 2009 to collect, study and analyze police data to root out racial bias in traffic stops. The change was supported by the Wisconsin Professional Police Association and signed into law by Gov. Jim Doyle despite unanimous Republican opposition. At the time, top Republican leaders said racial profiling “is not a problem in much of Wisconsin.” When Gov. Walker took office in 2011, one of his first official acts was to repeal this law and limit access to data on racial profiling.

“Democrats will continue to confront racial prejudices, identify the causes of racial disparities in our criminal justice system and ensure that our laws are being fairly enforced across the state,” said Sen. Shilling. “We cannot allow the ongoing harassment and unjustified abuse of power to continue unchecked. State leaders

have a responsibility to confront these challenges head on, protect the rights of all citizens and restore trust in our criminal judicial system. Given Gov. Walker's refusal to lead on this issue, lawmakers need to step up and put an end to racial profiling."