

Sen. Shilling: Walker continues to ignore prison assault crisis

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Contact: Kate Constalie, kate.constalie@legis.wi.gov, 608-266-5490

Safety concerns grow as administration ignores body camera mandate

MADISON, WI – While assaults at Wisconsin prisons have hit a record high under Gov. Walker, the administration has failed to meet a legislative mandate to improve worker safety. More than a year and a half after plans were announced to purchase and install body-worn cameras, Gov. Walker's administration says it has not installed any body cameras at the state's maximum security prisons despite a state law requiring them to do so.

"After ignoring the crisis at Lincoln Hills for years, Gov. Walker continues to jeopardize the safety of correctional officers and inmates across our state," said Senate Democratic Leader Jennifer Shilling (D-La Crosse). "Republicans repealed workplace safety protections, cut prison staffing and created a crisis at our correctional facilities. No one wants to work in a facility where they're short-staffed, where they don't have the proper security equipment, and where they are forced to gamble with their personal safety every single day. I don't understand how this administration continues to bungle even the most basic tasks like purchasing safety equipment."

In a report to the Legislature dated July 2, 2018, the Walker administration says none of the state's adult prisons have installed body-worn cameras despite a July 1st deadline to install and use cameras in all maximum security facilities. Staff shortages and overcrowding at state facilities in recent years have increased risks for correctional officers and inmates alike. More than 400 assaults on correctional officers were documented in the agency's most recent annual report – a record high

for the state. By the end of 2019, it is estimated that there will be 24,678 inmates housed at Wisconsin correctional facilities that are designed to hold 17,489 people.

Democrats have authored numerous bills to strengthen correctional facility safety, improve staffing levels, expand training for new hires, increase reporting requirements, limit the use of forced overtime and restore workplace safety protections - all of which have been blocked by the Republican majority.