

ACLU of Wisconsin: Urges legislature to pass bills that reduce mass incarceration

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MILWAUKEE – The ACLU of Wisconsin testified today at the State Capitol in favor of two pieces of legislation that would reduce the prison population, eliminate long prison sentences for crimeless technical violations, and rein in prolonged probation sentences for minor offenses.

The pair of bills up for consideration were Assembly Bills 830 and 831. AB 830 would expand eligibility for the earned release program, while AB 831 would limit how long a person can be incarcerated for technical rule violations of extended supervision, a measure aimed at mitigating the epidemic of crimeless revocation.

“This legislation would bring modest but welcome changes to the criminal legal system in Wisconsin,” said Statewide Smart Justice Organizer Sean Wilson. “While there is far more work to be done, these bills represent an important first step toward reforming this fundamentally unjust system and breaking the vicious cycle of reincarceration.”

Without action, Wisconsin’s overflowing prisons will burst at the seams – forcing taxpayers to foot the bill for a new state prison. Wisconsin’s broken probation and parole system drives reincarceration rather than rehabilitation and causes people to be thrown back in prison for minor mistakes like missing an appointment or even

starting a job without prior approval.

“No one should live one missed appointment away from a prison sentence or languish in a cage when they could be working productively in the community and supporting their families,” Wilson said. “Moving forward, we’re determined to build on this progress with reforms that will end Wisconsin’s mass incarceration crisis and ensure the movement to put people before prisons doesn’t leave anyone behind.”

Wisconsin’s prison population grew more than fivefold between 1980 and 2016. Today, more than 23,000 Wisconsinites are imprisoned, and when people on community supervision or in local jails are included the number increases to 1 in 45 adults. In 2017 alone, more than 3,000 Wisconsinites were sent back to prison for technical violations, accounting for 45 percent of all new admissions to state prisons, the largest such group who were incarcerated that year.

Read our full testimony here: <https://www.aclu-wi.org/en/-news/aclu-testifies-support-bills-aiming-combat-mass-incarceration>

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