

Rep. Bowen: Statement on Gov. Evers' justice reform proposals

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MILWAUKEE – In response to Governor Evers unveiling a number of justice reform bills earlier today, State Rep. David Bowen (D-Milwaukee) released the following statement:

“On the same day that I stood with fellow members of the Black Caucus on the top of the Capitol building to watch the Juneteenth flag fly over the Capitol for the first time in history, Governor Evers put forth a package of bills whose contents we have been championing throughout our elected service as Black legislators. I applaud Governor Evers for addressing the concerns of the Black Caucus and taking actionable steps that reform policing in Wisconsin and increase transparency.”

The package of bills announced by the governor today would invest in community programs that provide violence interruption, institute police practices that prioritize life while prohibiting dangerous police practices, build on the work of the Law Enforcement Standards Board, strengthen accountability measures and lower the demand on our officers to respond to situations they're not equipped to handle. This package is a mix of both Democratic and Republican proposals.

“While today we celebrate the end of slavery, the Black community is still struggling with the legacy of racism within legal structures and everyday life. The protests of the past three weeks have shown lawmakers that it is long overdue to change the status quo, and we can no longer meet systemic racism with inaction. Several of these bills are proposals that I have introduced in previous sessions that would make our communities safer by saving lives and lowering costs, but Republicans have not joined me in my efforts. Governor Evers has signaled that he is willing to work with Republicans to make our policing practices more equitable and transparent, and I hope that Republican legislators will hear the call of the

protestors and put politics aside to come to the table. Passing these bills would be an important first step towards real reform, but we must continue to rise to the moment. These bills are a good start, but they cannot be an end.”