

ACLU of Wisconsin: Calls enactment of SB 101 'A step in the wrong direction in Wisconsin's fight against drug overdoses'

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MADISON – The ACLU of Wisconsin issued the following statement after Gov. Evers signed Senate Bill 101 into law Friday.

James Stein, deputy advocacy director of the ACLU of Wisconsin, said the following:

“The decision by Gov. Evers today to sign SB 101 into law represents a step in the wrong direction in Wisconsin’s fight against drug overdoses. If we’ve learned anything from the failed War on Drugs, it’s that we cannot incarcerate our way out of addiction and drug use. Yet, after decades of abject policy failure, we still repeat the same mistakes.

The law enacted today is deeply misguided and counterproductive. It further entrenches us in destructive cycles of criminalization and punishment that devastate our communities – particularly Black and Brown communities – while doing little to nothing to combat drug problems. While purporting to crack down on drug distribution, SB 101 could lead to an increase in fatal overdoses, as people might be less likely to seek medical attention for someone overdosing out of fear of prosecution. In addition, an extensive body of research – as well as our own lived experiences – tells us that punitive drug laws don’t reduce drug use, addiction, or overdose.

We must shift our mentality to take meaningful steps toward saving lives and curbing overdoses. We cannot continue to do the same things we’ve done for

decades – excessively imprison, punish and criminalize vast numbers of people, disproportionately Black and Brown people – and expect anything different. This legislation was supported and enacted on a bipartisan basis, demonstrating that both political parties are at fault for our perverse response to drugs and that both parties have allowed “tough on crime” rhetoric to stand in the way of effective, evidence-based solutions predicated on prevention, not punishment.

We need a new paradigm based on healing, treatment, and a commitment to getting to the root causes of drug overdoses. Today our government has failed us again by refusing to answer that call.”

This press release is available online:

<https://www.aclu-wi.org/en/press-releases/aclu-wisconsin-calls-enactment-sb-101-stop-wrong-direction-wisconsin-fight-against>