



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 30, 2020

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**Rep. Bowen Statement on Continued Republican Inaction on
Criminal Justice Reform**

“It’s Time to Create Lasting Change”

MILWAUKEE - State Rep. David Bowen (D-Milwaukee) released the following statement in reflection on Wisconsin Republicans’ continued inaction on meaningful criminal justice reform:

“It is no stretch to say that Wisconsin has lagged behind other states in recent years when it comes to criminal justice and corrections reform. We have had to sit and watch as legislatures in other states across the country, representing all regions and all shades of the political spectrum, have managed to successfully come together and tackle necessary justice reform. Meanwhile, here in Wisconsin, these critical reforms continue to elude us. And it is not for lack of trying - in my three terms as a State Representative, I have personally introduced 30 different corrections or criminal justice reform bills - many aimed at bi-partisan compromise, not just left-leaning ideas. Of those 30, only six had Republican support, and of those six, only one made it through the legislative process and was signed into law. This willful obstructionism on the part of my Republican colleagues *must* end. We cannot continue to stand idly by and allow our state to keep pursuing regressive and unhelpful criminal justice practices.”

While Republican leadership in the Legislature has long stood in the way of meaningful justice reform legislation, 2020 has shone a spotlight on the issue. At the beginning of this year, Republican leadership scuttled earnest, productive bipartisan negotiations on wide-ranging criminal justice reform measures by instead ramming through a series of “Tougher on Crime” bills that even alienated members of their own party who recognize the need for reform. Since then, Republican leaders have continued to refuse to meet in Extraordinary Session to debate and pass criminal justice reform, despite a Special Session called by Governor Evers and clear support by members of their own party for various reform measures. Although Republican leadership continues to hide behind the fact that the Legislature is currently technically out of Session, they hold the power to call the Legislature into Extraordinary Session at any time, as infamously evidenced by their Lame Duck power grab in December 2018.

“Meaningful criminal justice reform **MUST** be on the table. This is a topic that has successfully been tackled in blue state, red states, and purple states alike, and yet Wisconsin’s Republican majority has bent over backwards to preserve a status quo that disrupts families and communities, many of whom are Black and brown, that wastes taxpayer dollars, and that sends a message that they care more about punishment than justice and prevention. That cannot continue to stand. I am calling on everyone, no matter their political background, to come together and make 2021 the year that Wisconsin finally embraces true justice, restoration & prevention over the continued costly callousness that defines our system right now. It’s time to create lasting change.”
