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When will the major issues in the Department of Corrections be realized? At this time, many institutions throughout our state have shut down units, wings, halls and soon even complete complexes. One would assume that this has to do with a reduction in the incarcerated population, but it is not. It's the result of a correctional officer shortage. Due to this growing shortage, every institution is suffering and some even have close to a 50% vacancy in staff positions. Lately, institution secretaries, chaplains and even those enticed out of retirement have been trying to fill the void. Furthermore, regular correctional officers are also working 70 plus hours a week.

This issue is quickly becoming even more complicated by an increasing backlog of over 20,000 felony court cases statewide, many due to delays caused by COVID-19. The only "solution" thusfar has been to throw more money at the issues. Governor Evers gave 15 million dollars to Milwaukee County to hire additional District Attorneys, Public Defenders and Court Reporters. The starting pay for correctional officers was increased for a second time, but unfortunately this has not had the desired effect as officers continue to retire and too few new applicants are applying.

During his campaign, Governor Evers talked often of reform within the prison and justice systems in an effort to reduce mass incarceration within the state. However, his only action to date has been creating stiffer laws that implement more mandatory minimums on sentences. Now there are plans to spend millions of dollars more on a brand new youth prison facility even though there are not enough staff statewide to fill positions at the existing 30 plus correctional institutions. The current mentality seems to be "if we build it, they will come" and does not make a lot of logical sense. The tax payers are already paying 6.7 billion dollars on incarceration with over 80 million set aside just to pay for correctional officers overtime.

It does not take a degree in rocket science to see that something must change and soon. I would like to suggest the following possible solutions. First, the removal of "truth-in-sentencing" policies that are outdated and failing. Numerous other states, such as Minnesota and

Texas have long since vacated this policy due to its utter lack of success in rehabilitation. The facts support that this policy results - in excessive sentencing with individuals serving significantly more time in prison when compared to the same crimes in other states. This has led to massive overcrowding issues and a heavier tax burden on tax payers within the Wisconsin prison system.

In fact, Wisconsin prisons are currently overwhelmed at over 170% design capacity. My second possible solution would be to reestablish Good Time Policy in the prison system. This policy grants those who are achieving positive changes, behavior and growth the ability to earn reduced sentences through credited days subtracted from their total term of confinement.

The current policy in Wisconsin of "truth-in-sentencing" does absolutely nothing to benefit individuals who are endeavoring to serve their time in positive and productive ways. Furthermore, Good Time Policies only benefit those who earn and deserve it through their daily actions.

In conclusion, I'd like to leave you with some final thoughts. Most incarcerated individuals will eventually be released and rejoin society. Which would you prefer? Your future neighbor to be overly institutionalized and not rehabilitated or someone that understands their mistakes and has used their incarceration to enact positive change within themselves. I for one would prefer someone who has been rehabilitated and knows the importance of asking for help. This is actually the main purpose for this letter. I would like to ask for your help with creating the change that Wisconsin desperately needs.

Respectfully,
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