

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

**DATE:** January 13, 2020

**TO:** Supervisor Theodore Lipscomb, Sr., Chairman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Mary Jo Meyers, Director, Department of Health and Human Services  
*Prepared by: Mark Mertens, Division of Youth & Family Services Administrator*

**SUBJECT: An informational report from the Director, Department of Health and Human Services, providing an update to Wisconsin Act 185**

**Background**

Over the past few years, the County Executive and Milwaukee County Board have been working with key stakeholders to address the crisis at Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake and have embraced policies surrounding the creation of a local alternative option for Milwaukee County youth to be placed in a safe environment, closer to home.

In March 2018, the Wisconsin State Legislature adopted Act 185 paving the way for the development of local alternatives to Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake. Act 185 directs the closure of Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake for use as youth correctional facilities by July 1, 2021 and authorizes County-operated Secured Residential Care Centers for Children and Youth (SRCCCYs). Under Act 185, the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) maintains supervision over youth with adult court sentences and youth in the Serious Juvenile Offender Program (SJOP), but the supervision of youth under other correctional placements is now transferred to the counties.

In late June 2019, the Legislature passed AB188/SB168 which amended Act 185 and extended the deadline for the closure of Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake from January 1, 2021 to July 1, 2021. The amendments also pushed out the deadline to October 1 as the date by which the Juvenile Corrections Grant Committee must make recommendations and establish a Wisconsin Model of Youth Justice Statewide Plan.

The original Act 185 legislation included \$40 million to counties for the planning and construction of SRCCCYs. The 2019-2021 Adopted State Budget increased this allocation by \$40 million for a total of \$80 million in State bonding. Per Act 185, the State is to fund 95 percent of the design and construction of SRCCCYs with counties contributing the remaining 5 percent. Grants are to cover 100 percent of the design and construction of facilities for girls.

Eligible construction costs under Act 185 include new construction as well as the renovation of an existing structure. To qualify for the funds, counties were required to submit a grant application to the Grant Committee by July 1, 2019. The original deadline in Act 185 of March 31, 2019 was amended by the Legislature as part of AB188/SB168.

In order to meet the original March 31 deadline, DHHS submitted an application, approved by the County Board (File No. 19-236), which reflected the construction of a new facility at an estimated cost of \$41 million. It wasn't until mid-June that the DOC released the application for the July 1 submittal. DHHS then revised its application for submittal by the July 1 deadline. As discussed in the September

report (File No. 19-23), based on a request from the Grant Committee that counties identify cost-saving proposals due to a significant gap in available funding, DHHS revised its original proposal and submitted two options on September 9.

Option A involves the renovation of Vel Phillips and leased beds in the community and Option B reflects the renovation of Vel Phillips only. It is important to note that these options involve no addition, expansion or renovation of detention facilities. Both options are anticipated to cost the same at \$24,858,203. This cost is dramatically lower than previous estimates of \$41 million.

On October 1, 2019, the Grant Committee recommended Milwaukee County's proposal along with the proposals from Dane, Brown and Racine Counties to the State Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance (JCF) as part of the Wisconsin Model of Youth Justice. Per Act 185, the Grant Committee is required to submit this plan for approval to JCF.

### **Project Update**

As of this writing, Joint Finance has not taken action on the Grant Committee's recommendations. The legislative impasse appears to be caused by a State funding gap. The State's appropriation of \$80 million for the construction of the SRCCCYs is insufficient to support the nearly \$111 million in proposals recommended by the Grant Committee. Until this issue is resolved, SRCCCY projects cannot move forward without JCF approval. New legislation may be required.

Without a grant award, the design process is currently on hold. The Governor has already indicated publicly that the statutorily imposed deadline of July 1, 2021 for the closure of Lincoln Hills may not be met without additional funding. Based on the State's delay, Milwaukee County's project will not be completed by this timeframe either given that its project would take about 18 to 24 months to complete after grant notification.

Please see the grant recommendations below:

**SRCCCY Grant Recommendations**

<b>County</b>	<b>Facility Type</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Est. Cost</b>
Brown	New stand-alone SRCCCY and short-term detention facility	24 SRCCCY beds: 16 boys; 8 girls	\$43M (State portion: \$40.88M)
Dane	Expansion of existing short-term detention facility	23 - 29 SRCCCY beds: 18-23 boys, 5-6 girls	\$6.7M (State portion: \$6.46M)
Milwaukee	Plan A: Renovation of existing detention facility plus leased space  Plan B: Renovation of existing detention facility only	Plan A: 40 beds (boys only)  Plan B: 32 beds (boys only)	Plan A: Not to exceed \$24.86M (State portion: Not to exceed \$23.62M)  Plan B: \$24.86M (State portion: \$23.62M)
Racine	New stand-alone SRCCCY and short-term detention facility	32 SRCCCY beds	\$40M
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$114.56M</b> <b>(State portion: \$110.96M)</b>

**Next Steps**

DHHS will continue to provide monthly updates to the County Board.

**Recommendation**

This report is informational and no action is required.



Mary Jo Meyers, Director  
Department of Health and Human Services

- cc: County Executive Chris Abele  
 Hon. Maxine A. White, Chief Judge  
 Raisa Koltun, County Executive’s Office  
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