

A resolution by Supervisors West, Alexander, Taylor (2), Moore Omokunde, and Nicholson seeking criminal justice reform in the State of Wisconsin and the United States to reduce mass incarceration safely and effectively, by recommending adoption of the following:

A RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the term “mass incarceration” is used to describe the massive increase in incarcerated people in the United States (U.S.) over the past 40 years, from roughly 200,000 in the 1970’s to over 2.3 million today, according to the U.S. Department of Justice; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. has the highest prison population in the world and the second highest prison population rate in the world, at 666 per 100,000 people, according to the United Kingdom based Institute for Criminal Policy Research (ICPR); and

WHEREAS, although the U.S. represents only five percent of the world’s population, it holds 25 percent of the world’s prison population, per the ICPR; and

WHEREAS, when the ICPR adjusted for other factors, such as victimization rates, and spending on social services and economic development, it found that the U.S. incarcerates people at substantially higher rates than other comparable countries; and

WHEREAS, mass incarceration in the U.S. disproportionately affects Blacks, Hispanics, poor individuals, and individuals with high rates of mental illness and substance abuse; and

WHEREAS, numerous studies find that for similar offenses, Blacks and Hispanics are more likely to be stopped, searched, arrested, convicted, and sentenced to harsher penalties than Whites; and

WHEREAS, in the State of Wisconsin (the State) and particularly in Milwaukee County (the County), the problem of mass incarceration is especially pronounced for Black men; and

WHEREAS, a 2013 study from the University of Wisconsin (UW) Milwaukee found the State had the highest incarceration rates for Black men in the country at 13 percent, almost double the overall rate of the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, the zip code 53206, a predominantly Black neighborhood in the County, had the highest incarceration rate in the country; and

WHEREAS, the impacts of incarceration can make it difficult for individuals to find employment upon release, and they are more likely to have depressed earnings, poorer health, increased debt, difficulties with transportation and housing, and food insecurity; and

WHEREAS, the collateral consequences compound when considering the effects of mass incarceration on children, family members, friends, and the community of the incarcerated individual; and

WHEREAS, in the U.S. one in four women had an incarcerated family member in 2015, and the rate was even higher for Black women, with one in 2.5 having an incarcerated family member, or over 6 million Black women, according to the Du Bois Review's article Racial Inequalities in Connectedness to Imprisoned Individuals in the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, Pew Research Center data found that almost two-thirds of men who were imprisoned had been employed prior to their incarceration, and nearly half had lived with their children prior to incarceration; and

WHEREAS, the average family income fell 22 percent the year following the father's incarceration, according to Pew Research Center data; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, 11.4 percent of Black children had an incarcerated parent, 3.5 percent of Hispanic children, and 1.8 percent of White children, according to Boston University's School of Public Health; and

WHEREAS, data suggests that children growing up in single-parent families are at an increased risk for psychiatric disease, suicide, and addiction; and

WHEREAS, there are also economic considerations; with the State spending over \$1.2 billion a year on the Department of Corrections, more than what the State spent on the UW system in 2017, and multiple studies reveal little correlation between crime rates and incarceration; and

WHEREAS, in the State, in 2015, spending by state and local governments on corrections was ten percent higher than the national average and 65 percent higher than Minnesota and Illinois; and

WHEREAS, excessive incarceration of low-risk offenders can actually *increase* the likelihood of recidivism, according to a 2015 Congressional Research Report; and

WHEREAS, in response to the overuse of jails and prisons, groups like WISDOM (the Wisconsin affiliate of the Gamaliel Foundation) and JustLeadershipUSA, a national organization focused on decarceration, want to decrease the number of people in prison in half; and

93 WHEREAS, studies show that treatment and diversion programs cost less and
94 are more effective at reducing recidivism and lowering crime rates; and
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96 WHEREAS, every dollar spent on the Wisconsin Treatment Alternatives and
97 Diversion program saves taxpayers \$1.96, according to a study by the UW Population
98 Health Institute; and
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100 WHEREAS, mass incarceration is a major social issue with huge social,
101 economic, and racial costs, and reform must start now; and
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103 WHEREAS the Committee on Judiciary, Safety, and General Services, at its
104 meeting of March 8, 2018, recommended adoption of File No. 18-225 (vote 4-0); now,
105 therefore,
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107 BE IT RESOLVED, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors (County Board)
108 supports efforts to reduce mass incarceration and reform practices that
109 disproportionately impact communities of color in Wisconsin and the United States
110 (U.S.); and
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112 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the County Board requests that the Wisconsin
113 State Legislature and the Governor provide increased funding to the Wisconsin
114 Treatment Alternatives and Diversion (TAD) program; and
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116 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the County Board supports a comprehensive
117 review and revision of Wisconsin's sentencing guidelines, parole processes, and
118 revocation processes to ensure they are in line with best practices around the country;
119 and
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121 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, upon adoption, the Office of Government Affairs
122 is authorized and requested to deliver a copy of this resolution to the President of the
123 U.S., all members of Wisconsin's Congressional delegation, all members of the
124 Wisconsin Legislature, and the Governor of Wisconsin.
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