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A resolution by Supervisors Nicholson, Johnson, Jr., Shea, and Taylor calling upon the United States Congress to repeal the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (1994 Crime Bill), and further calling upon Congress to pass and the President to sign, the Freedom to Thrive Public Safety Act of 2021, by recommending adoption of the following:

A RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the primary goal of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (1994 Crime Bill) was to reduce violent crime following the 1993 Waco Siege, and other high-profile instances of violent crime, by expanding the Federal death penalty, and adding a variety of new crimes defined in Federal Statutes relating to immigration law, sex crimes, and gang-related crime; and

WHEREAS, rather than achieving the goal of singularly reducing violent crime, the 1994 Crime Bill has instead utilized billions of dollars to support prison construction, over five years authorizing \$23.1 billion for law enforcement and prison construction, while only \$7.1 billion went to grants combating “violent crimes against women,” drug courts, after-school programs, and employment and business development programs; and

WHEREAS, rather than using resources to invest in substance abuse centers, mental health clinics, youth programs, supportive housing, and basic urban infrastructure revitalization, the funds associated with the 1994 Crime Bill have focused primarily on the building and operating of new prisons, which include incarcerated undocumented immigrants, and expanded the size and scope of police and corrections departments, putting tremendous pressure on State and local municipalities by adding additional budgetary constraints; and

WHEREAS, one function of the 1994 Crime Bill was to improve public safety with the implementation of the “three strikes” rule, which imposes mandatory life imprisonment without parole upon committing specified crimes, but due to a lack of proper oversight, has resulted in mass incarceration, which has proven to be overall detrimental to communities by destabilizing an entire generation of Americans and their families, with a particularly destructive impact on Black communities; and

WHEREAS, many of the mechanisms included in the 1994 Crime Bill have been proven ineffective, and the United States’ prison population constitutes 25 percent of the world’s prisoners, and the criminal justice system costs taxpayers \$260 billion a year; and

43 WHEREAS, among these many stated flaws, the 1994 Crime Bill additionally:
44

- 45 • Included a ten year assault weapons ban, which expired in 2004.
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- 47 • Expanded the Federal death penalty, creating 60 new death
48 penalty offenses.
49
- 50 • Eliminated Pell Grants for people in prison, which had helped
51 incarcerated individuals afford educational classes in prison to learn
52 skills, and ultimately reduce recidivism.
53
- 54 • Permitted 13-year-olds to be tried as adults.
55

56 ; and
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58 WHEREAS, the creation of a Federal Freedom to Thrive Public Safety Act of
59 2021 (Freedom to Thrive), pending introduction in September 2019, would advance
60 school safety by ending the school-to-prison pipeline by stopping the shifting focus from
61 punitive measures and suspensions, instead investing in student education and support,
62 such as counseling, after-school programs, restorative justice, and meal programs in
63 lieu of school policing; and
64

65 WHEREAS, Freedom to Thrive would work to end gun violence by regulating
66 manufacturers, limiting firearms production, and supporting community-based violence
67 interruption initiatives, rather than through incarceration and policing, as these programs
68 have shown to effectively lower crime; and
69

70 WHEREAS, the 1994 Crime Bill has demonstrated an inability to fulfill its purpose
71 without draconian punishment and imprisonment, increased resources promoting the
72 militarization of the police, and caused the destabilization of communities and families
73 en masse; and
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75 WHEREAS, the Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, at its meeting of
76 September 5, 2019, recommended adoption of File No. 19-737 (vote 5-0); now,
77 therefore,
78

79 BE IT RESOLVED, Milwaukee County (the County) hereby calls upon the United
80 States Congress to introduce and pass, and the President to sign, the Freedom to
81 Thrive Public Safety Act of 2021, legislation that would acknowledge the harms and
82 ineffectiveness of mass criminalization and mass incarceration, and begin to repair the
83 damage wrought by the 1994 Crime Bill, and the punitive, expensive, violent, and racist
84 systems of criminalization, by investing in the health and well-being of communities and
85 our nation; and
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87 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the County requests the County Clerk provide this
88 resolution to Federal elected officials who represent any part of the County.

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91 kae

92 09/05/19

93 s:\committees\2019\sept\igr 090519\resolutions\19-737 repeal 1994 crime bill.docx