



CHRIS TAYLOR

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ♦ 76th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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Rep. Taylor Decries GOP “Tougher On Crime” Package

Republicans pass bills to turn back the clock on criminal justice and lock up more children

MADISON – Today, Republicans in the legislature approved a series of bills that move our state backwards on the issue of criminal justice reform.

All of the proposed bills would substantially increase taxpayer costs in the prison system, but one of the bills in particular, Assembly Bill 805, would raise costs by more than \$211 million over two years and might require the state to build two new prisons at a cost of \$350 million each, according to the Department of Corrections. Another bill, Assembly Bill 806, would increase the number of offenses that qualify a juvenile for the Serious Juvenile Offender Program, including drug crimes, which would send even more youth to Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake.

In response, Representative Chris Taylor (D-Madison) released the following statement:

“These Republican bills aim to take us back decades in terms of criminal justice reform, back towards a ‘mass incarceration’ mentality that didn’t make our communities safer, but increased incarceration populations and costs. Thirty-four states, both red and blue, have demonstrated that we can reduce incarceration and crime rates, while saving millions of dollars. Republicans in Wisconsin are doing the opposite.

“I am particularly appalled by Assembly Bill 806, which would actually increase the amount of youth being sent to Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake. Not only does this buck national trends in providing trauma-informed care to troubled youth who often are the victims of abuse and neglect, but it puts in reverse our actions of two years ago when every member of this body voted to close these facilities. We all agreed that these big-box juvenile correctional facilities, far away from the communities of the incarcerated youth are the wrong way to go. The evidence is overwhelming that youth do better when they are kept closer to home in a local, rehabilitative setting. The last time I went to Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake, every child I spoke to had been the victim of abuse or neglect. We have to address this trauma, not further derail their futures. Instead of expanding the range of felonies where youth can be deemed serious offenders and locking them up for longer, we should be prioritizing education, treatment, and overall well-being.

“Putting more children in prison will do absolutely nothing to make our communities safer or help our children make better decisions—in fact it will do the exact opposite. It is disgraceful that my Republican colleagues have ignored what actually works to reduce crime, reduce incarceration, and reduce costs in favor of scare tactics to score political points.”

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