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*Linking faith communities across Wisconsin to work for Justice*

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**It's Time to Close Green Bay Correctional Institution  
It's Time to Re-invest in Programs to Restore Our Communities**

*Let's spend \$1 billion on community instead of cages!*

Welcome to Wisconsin where, in many communities, being taken away to jail or prison is more common than being sent off to college. The prison population in this state has more than tripled since 1990, burdening taxpayers, compromising public safety and hindering justice.

The Green Bay Correctional Institution (GBCI) was constructed in 1898. A May 3, 2019 report\* of the Legislative Audit Bureau reported that many believe its antiquated design is not conducive to the efficient operation of a modern prison. The report further stated that GBCI is the best candidate for closure among Wisconsin's prisons. The Village Board of Allouez — the Green Bay suburb where GBCI is located -- has unanimously supported the distribution of a petition supporting the decommissioning of GBCI.

It is clear that after 121 years GBCI is nearing the end of its useful life. That means that Wisconsin's Governor and State Legislature have a big decision to make: Will our state spend \$1 billion over the next 20 years to build and operate a new prison, or will we join the many states around the nation that are reducing their prison populations? Will we spend \$1 billion on another prison, or will we invest \$1 billion over the next 20 years on programs that can uplift our people, reduce crime, and re-build our communities?

**A Billion Dollars?**

The estimated cost to build a new prison in the Green Bay area would be between \$300-400 million. That would typically be paid by taking out bonds, to be re-paid over the next 20-30 years. The annual cost to operate a prison like the one envisioned would be between \$30-40 million per year. Even at the low end of both estimates, Wisconsin taxpayers would pay more than \$900 million over 20 years. With interest costs, the investment would be at least \$1 billion.

If we choose not to replace GBCI, Wisconsin could invest \$50 million each year, for the next 20 years, in programs like Treatment Alternatives and Diversions, programs for at-risk youth, and innovative public health approaches to violence prevention, which would not only help to restore lives, families and communities; but would also further reduce the prison population.

\*Report 19-4, "Adult Corrections Expenditures", <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/lab/audit-reports/reports-by-year/>

## **Where Would the People Go Who Are Now at GBCI?**

GBCI houses about 1,000 men. In the Wisconsin prison system, there are 5,000 people who have been re-incarcerated for “crimeless revocations” – meaning they have not been convicted of a new crime, but have committed a “technical violation” of their terms of supervision.

Another 3,000 have been incarcerated more than 20 years and are eligible for parole.

At least 2,000 more could be diverted from prison each year if Wisconsin fully funded the Treatment Alternatives and Diversions (TAD) program.

There are 36 adult institutions in the Wisconsin prison system. Wisconsin can reduce the prison census by dealing with parole, revocations and TAD to create more than enough space to accommodate the men who are currently housed at GBCI *in less time than it would take to build a new prison.*

## **What are Other States Doing?**

The same 2019 Legislative Audit Bureau report showed that from 2009-2018, Illinois **reduced** its prison population by 9.5%; Michigan’s was reduced by 14.6%; Indiana’s was reduced by 8.8%. At the same time, Wisconsin’s prison population **increased** by 4.4% (GBCI houses about 4% of Wisconsin’s prison population.) Michigan has closed 12 prisons in recent years; South Carolina has closed 6.

Michigan has reduced prison spending by \$400 million per year. South Carolina has saved more than \$490 million in the past six years by reducing crimeless revocations, by diverting many people convicted of low-level crimes into alternatives, and by reforming its sentencing practices. Louisiana has committed itself to a 10% decrease in its prison population within the next 10 years.

To decommission GBCI without building a new prison would help Wisconsin to catch up to the progress being made by other states. To re-invest \$50 million per year in programs of restoration would be a fiscally prudent step.

## **What Can We Do?**

We invite you to join us on November 21 in Green Bay to kick off this campaign. Help us to build and demonstrate statewide support. The event begins at 6 pm at St. Matthew Church (130 St. Matthew Street, Green Bay – just 3 blocks from GBCI).

The WISDOM Prison Prevention Task Force, along with JOSHUA (the WISDOM organization in Green Bay) is asking WISDOM affiliates and EXPO chapters around the state to create awareness of the opportunity represented by decommissioning and not replacing GBCI. We ask every WISDOM organization and EXPO chapter to identify a point person with whom we can communicate about future events and developments.

**Please direct questions and the contact information for your organization’s point person to David Liners at [david.liners1@gmail.com](mailto:david.liners1@gmail.com) or 414-736-2099**