



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

September 9, 2014

Secretary Ed Wall
Wisconsin Department of Corrections
3099 E. Washington Ave.
P.O. Box 7925
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7925

Dear Secretary Wall,

We hope this letter finds you and your family well.

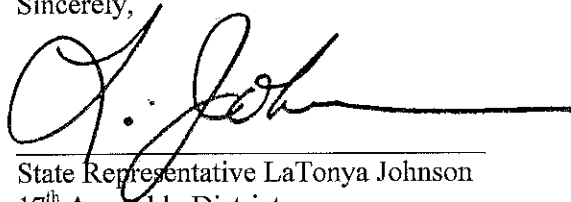
We are writing in the hopes of opening further dialogue with the Department of Corrections (DOC) and WISDOM. As you are aware, DOC has received recent attention and scrutiny pertaining to allegations of abuse against inmates by correctional officers at the Waupun Correctional Institution. The Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism has published a series of articles that have drawn great interest and concern from many of our constituents and local Milwaukee WISDOM members.

It is our understanding after speaking with WISDOM and constituents that your office received the enclosed letters, including one addressed to Governor Walker which was referred to DOC. To our knowledge, WISDOM has not received a formal response to their correspondence from DOC nor have they been granted a meeting with DOC officials to discuss their concerns further. This lack of communication and appearance of minimal transparency is troubling to the families of inmates, criminal justice advocates, and legislators, among others.

While we may sometimes disagree on what direction Wisconsin should take in regards to criminal justice reform, we are confident that a full and thoughtful response and/or dialogue of how DOC plans to address these allegations, what steps are taken to educate correctional officers on appropriate use of force, and how all parties can work together moving forward, will be very productive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



State Representative LaTonya Johnson
17th Assembly District



State Representative Evan Goyke
18th Assembly District

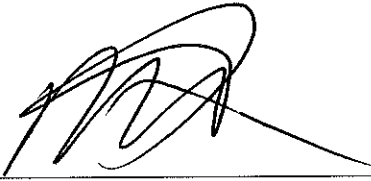
Enclosures



State Senator Nikiya Harris Dodd
6th Senate District



State Representative Sandy Pasch
10th Assembly District



State Representative Mandela Barnes
11th Assembly District



State Representative Christine Sinicki
20th Assembly District



MICAH CUSH RIC SOPHIA JOSHUA ESTHER JONAH AMOS NAOMI RUTH MOSES
Milwaukee Kenosha Racine Waukesha Green Bay Fox Valley Eau Claire La Crosse Wausau Manitowoc Madison

The Gamaliel Foundation in Wisconsin

Phone: 414-831-2070 Email: wisdomforjustice@gmail.com
Address: 3195 S. Superior St. Suite 313, Milwaukee, WI 53207

July 30, 2014

Dear Secretary Wall,

As Executive Director of WISDOM, I write to communicate the deep disappointment many of our members have expressed today regarding comments by your spokesperson. The Governor's office passed our request for an investigation by the US Department of Justice into the documented allegations of abuse occurring at the Waupun Correctional Institution to your Department. Your spokesperson dismissed our request out of hand saying that all the allegations had been investigated by the Dodge County Sheriffs' Department and all were found to be baseless, as have all the other allegations of abuse coming out of Waupun.

You must understand that the complex web of relationships between your Department and all law enforcement agencies in Wisconsin make any claim to an independent investigation fatally suspect. Local law enforcement agencies routinely enforce the probation and parole rules set by your Department, and you pay local sheriffs more than sixteen million dollars a year to house state prisoners. For many counties, revenue from the Department of Corrections is an important line item in their annual budgets.

You surely know that Sheriff Ninmann was appointed to her position by Governor Walker in 2013, just as you were in 2012. Furthermore, the Dodge County Sheriff's Department in particular has a nationwide reputation for the fatal use of excessive force, as was documented in Michelle Alexander's book [The New Jim Crow](#).

We would hope that you and the Governor would welcome the sunshine of a truly independent investigation by the US Department of Justice. Your stated commitment to reforming the use of solitary confinement in Wisconsin is apparently not being shared by people in your Department.

The first step in restoring accountability and credibility to the Department is to find out what is really going on in the segregation units in your prisons. You need outside help to make that happen.

Sincerely,

David Liners
WISDOM Executive Director



MICAH CUSH RIC SOPHIA JOSHUA ESTHER JONAH AMOS NAOMI RUTH MOSES
Milwaukee Kenosha Racine Waukesha Green Bay Fox Valley Eau Claire La Crosse Wausau Manitowoc Madison

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July 29, 2014

Dear Governor Walker,

"The Department of Corrections is out of control." That is the inescapable conclusion drawn from a series of in-depth reports by Bill Lueders and the Center for Investigative Journalism. It is now clear that the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, as a matter of policy, routinely engages in torture. As Governor, you have the authority and responsibility to end the torture now. It is also your sworn duty as chief executive to protect the lives of the men currently in solitary confinement from any form of retaliation as a result of making their conditions public.

It is well-documented that the severe psychological stress of spending 23-24 hours a day in a stainless steel and concrete box, with little to no natural sunlight for months on end, no physical contact with friends or family – no ability to hug them or even shake their hands, and virtually nothing to do, leads to lasting psychological damage and does nothing towards rehabilitation. As Secretary of Corrections Ed Wall said in a memo to his staff, "simply locking inmates up with little consideration for programming, corrective instruction or positive reinforcement may really just be helping to create a worse behavior problem."

In 2012, according to a report provided by the Department of Corrections, more than 4,000 men lived in segregation for longer than 30 days; this was 20% of the entire prison population. 118 prisoners had been kept in segregation continuously for over two years, and some men in our prisons today have been isolated from real human contact for decades. The United Nations' own expert on torture has testified that no prisoner should be kept in solitary confinement for longer than 15 days — and then only for safety reasons.

While any extended use of solitary confinement is by definition torture, the problem is particularly acute at Waupun Correctional Institution. The exhaustive five-month investigation by the independent Center for Investigative Journalism found that many of the inmates in solitary confinement are mentally ill and subject to alleged routine abuse by guards and indifference by staff. In addition to no effective treatment for mental illness, the inmates are deprived of the "programming, corrective instruction or positive reinforcement" that Secretary Wall says is necessary.

When the well-founded concerns of the Secretary for the welfare of the inmates under his care are not, or cannot, be implemented, the Department is out of control. His words and the actions of his department are contradictory. In the face of overwhelming evidence in the recent reports, Corrections officials refused to address, or even to acknowledge, the abuse that is taking place. It is clear that the Department of Corrections cannot be asked to investigate itself. Investigation

and correction can only come from an outside audit, as has been done in Pennsylvania and other states, and it must be requested by you, Governor Walker.

The abuse of solitary confinement in Wisconsin has been an open secret. Secretary Ed Wall knows about it. Wardens know about it, the prison medical staff knows about it, correctional officers know about it, and the Legislative Fiscal Bureau knows about it. Now you, Governor Walker, know about it.

On behalf of the tens of thousands of people of faith from around Wisconsin who comprise WISDOM, and together with many more people of good will who will no longer tolerate our own state government engaging in torture, we call on you do the following;

*Immediately request a prompt, independent investigation by the US Department of Justice of abuses in the segregation unit in Waupun, and make the findings public;

*Immediately transfer the officer named in the majority of the complaints from inmates in the segregation unit at Waupun to other duties until the investigation is completed, and give your personal guarantee that no prisoner will be subject to further abuse as retribution for cooperating with investigations;

*Immediately order the Department of Corrections to implement some basic reforms, including:

--Implementation in men's prisons of the successful mental health units that now exist for women at Taycheedah;

--Ordering that correctional officers must be rotated from segregation units to other units every three months;

--Ordering that all Correctional officers be given better training in how to deal with difficult prisoners;

--Implementation of an independent inmate complaint system and a way for staff to safely report other staff.

This torture is no longer a secret. These inmates are not alone and their mistreatment is not unnoticed. You and Secretary Wall will be held accountable for any more deaths or abuse of inmates in solitary.

Ms. Sandra Milligan
WISDOM President