



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
Milwaukee County
CHRIS ABELE • COUNTY EXECUTIVE

May 16, 2019

Ms. Emilie Amundson, Secretary Designee, Wisconsin Department of Children and Families
201 E Washington Avenue
Madison, WI 53703

Mr. Kevin A. Carr, Secretary Designee, Wisconsin Department of Corrections
3099 E Washington Avenue
Madison, WI 53707

Members of the Juvenile Corrections Grant Committee
State Capitol
2 East Main Street
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Secretary Designees Amundson and Carr & Juvenile Corrections Grant Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to present to the grant committee on May 6 and for hearing and acknowledging the concerns expressed by Milwaukee County and others in regard to Act 185 and DOC 347. We all share a common vision of creating a youth justice system that is fair, safe, effective, and responsive to the needs of youth and families. We are grateful for your leadership and we recognize the difficult task this committee faces. We would also like to summarize the recommendations we presented at the committee meeting and ask for your advocacy in pursuing appropriate changes that we believe will result in a more effective and sustainable youth justice system. Those recommendations include:

- Revising DOC 347 to allow for smaller, community-based SRCCCY programs that could be developed with private providers and community partners. Removing requirements for sally ports, eight-inch thick “detention grade” walls, and other provisions would allow jurisdictions to establish small, local, secure facilities that more effectively meet local need, match the economies of scale, and are more cost effective. Milwaukee County officials have spoken to executives from three private providers whose agencies would be

interested in partnerships of this kind. Two could serve Milwaukee, and one could serve central and northern Wisconsin.

- Allow for funding under Act 185 for the expansion of community-based programming aimed at pro-social supports, work force development, and proven family interventions both to prevent youth from penetrating into the deep end of the system and to provide for more robust aftercare for youth returning from a placement.
- Eliminate the label of “Serious Juvenile Offender” or “Serious Juvenile Offender Program” from Chapter 938 and replace with “youth eligible for extended supervision”. Stigmatizing labels only work counter to the mission of rehabilitation and set the stage for harmful disparate treatment.
- Revisit the provision in Act 185 calling for new regional Type I facilities. Youth prisons are dangerous, ineffective, unnecessary, obsolete, wasteful, and inadequate in protecting the community or in rehabilitating our youth. We should end our legacy of abusive youth corrections institutions. In their place, the Department of Corrections should establish regional SRCCYs to serve youth who qualify for extended supervision.

We believe that these changes would provide for a better and more cost-effective delivery of safe, secure programming for youth in our state. As you know, there is a broad consensus that Act 185 as it stands today is underfunded. As the budget discussion advances, we believe that investing in people and programs and transforming versus repairing broken systems is the most astute path forward.

Sincerely,



Chris Abele
Milwaukee County Executive