



January 2015

To:

We the citizens of Dane County and members of MOSES and WISDOM* demand urgent fixes to all levels of Dane County's criminal justice system. Dane County has some of the nation's worst incarceration rates of African Americans, intolerable use of solitary confinement, including of people with mental illness, and a great deal of unnecessary incarceration caused by outdated policies and practices.

We call for immediate implementation of proven practices to stop all unnecessary and inappropriate incarceration, as follows:

- Create Restoration/Resource Centers with full range of mental health and social services, that are community-based alternatives to jail (not jails run by sheriff's office)
- Close the Ferris Center and replace it with Day Reporting Centers as part of Resource Centers
- Immediately reduce excessive use and harsh conditions of solitary confinement
- Fully implement treatment, alternatives, and diversions (TAD) including
 - Crisis Intervention (mental health professionals accompany police), restorative justice, drug court, mental health court, alcohol treatment programs, etc.
- Reduce unnecessary arrests and racial disparities in arrest rates
- Implement bail loan program (with Hoover Foundation) and alternatives to bail
- Expand pre-sentencing program; stop making people wait in jail for court date
- Expand home monitoring/bracelet program and correct racially unbalanced participation
- Help people apply for FoodShare and job training, health insurance, and other benefits and resources
- Stop incarcerating people merely for an inability to pay bail, fees, fines (i.e., end the use of jail as a "debtors' prison")
- Stop jailing people for faulty GPS equipment, technical violations of probation and parole, and while awaiting revocation hearings. This will require strong negotiation with WI DOC.

Within weeks, the unsafe areas of the City-County building jail (e.g., where locks stick) could be vacated, and solitary confinement drastically reduced or ended. Unnecessary incarceration must first be stopped before future facility needs can be predicted. Do not waste time and money on yet more studies for new (or remodeled) jail facilities. Instead, implement evidence-based practices and alternatives to jail that promote individuals' success and public safety far more effectively than jail, at a fraction of the cost. Repeated studies by national and federal consultants have advised this for years, to little avail. Dane County lags far behind other places, even other Wisconsin counties, in implementing proven practices.

Our community is in crisis, and you must act accordingly. Follow the lead of your constituents in MOSES and WISDOM and our partner the Hoover Family Foundation: Implement proven practices in all aspects of the criminal justice system immediately.

Signed,

* MOSES (Madison Organizing in Strength, Equality, and Solidarity) is one of ten affiliates of WISDOM, a state-wide interfaith community organization. WISDOM's 11x15 campaign seeks to reduce Wisconsin's prison population by half by the end of 2015. See <http://mosesmadison.org/> and Prayforjusticewi.org