

# WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. Box 7882 - Madison, WI 53707

March 2016

Senator Rob Cowles, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Audit  
118 South, State Capitol

Representative Samantha Kerkman, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Audit  
318 North, State Capitol

Dear Senator Cowles and Representative Kerkman,

We, the undersigned, write today to request that you schedule a public hearing at which the Joint Legislative Audit Committee may consider directing the Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) to conduct an audit of the Department of Corrections.

There is no doubt the department is experiencing significant problems related to staff shortages and forced overtime. Current inmate populations are 130 percent of capacity which, coupled with the staffing issues, creates a very dangerous situation. Some of us have been contacted by Corrections staff who fear retaliation from senior officials for reporting their concerns to legislators. All of this contributes to an exodus of staff in both the institutions and the agency.

Treatment of inmates has dominated the news with reports about the horrific treatment of juveniles under the custody of the Corrections at the facility in Lincoln Hills. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has reportedly taken over leadership of an investigation at Lincoln Hills. Counties like Milwaukee and Racine are removing juveniles from Lincoln Hills and this puts the entire facility existence in question.

Secretary Wall's resignation leaves many questions unanswered. Some cautiously welcomed the appointment of the new Secretary, Jon Litscher, as he has experience leading the department under then Governor Thompson. However, much has changed since Secretary Litscher's last time at the helm and an audit of Corrections could help inform the new Secretary.

An audit that would include any, if not all, of the following important issues would provide accurate, independent information from the LAB that would enable us to make evidence-based decisions about what changes are needed within Corrections:

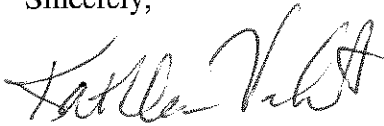
- security and staffing,
- training of staff,
- overtime policies,
- turnover, assaults on staff in adult correctional facilities and the overall safety of staff,
- safety and care of juvenile inmates,
- human resources policies and practices.

This month both the Senate and Assembly passed Senate Joint Resolution 90, which recognized the quality, professional, nonpartisan work conducted the LAB for the past 50 years. We simply must apply the expertise of the Bureau to assess the complicated issues that have occurred within Corrections and, most importantly, help the new Secretary, the administration and the Legislature determine how best to chart a path forward to improve management of this department. The recommendations from the respected LB would provide an independent assessment that would provide valuable to the new secretary.

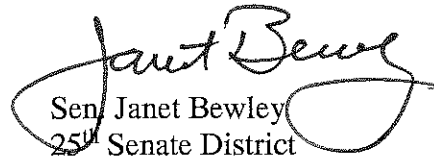
While we urge you to approve an audit of these corrections issues, we are already encouraging those with information about specific concerns at Corrections to contact the LAB Hotline at 1-877-FRAUD-17. As you know, the Bureau is required by law to protect the identity of the caller and will investigate the tips it receives.

Thank you and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



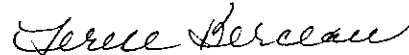
Sen. Kathleen Vinehout  
31<sup>st</sup> Senate District



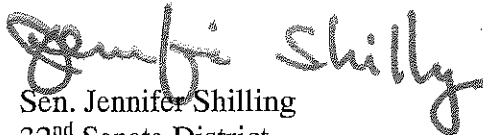
Sen. Janet Bewley  
25<sup>th</sup> Senate District



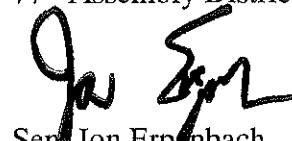
Rep. Melissa Sargent  
48<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



Rep. Terese Berceau  
77<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



Sen. Jennifer Shilling  
32<sup>nd</sup> Senate District



Sen. Jon Erpenbach  
27<sup>th</sup> Senate District



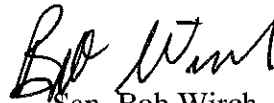
Sen. Mark Miller  
16<sup>th</sup> Senate District



Sen. Dave Hansen  
30<sup>th</sup> Senate District



Sen. Janis Ringhand  
15<sup>th</sup> Senate District



Sen. Bob Wirth  
22 Senate District




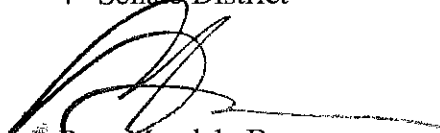
Sen. Chris Larson  
7<sup>th</sup> Senate District





Sen. Nikiya Harris-Dodd  
6<sup>th</sup> Senate District

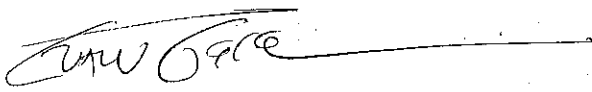
  
Sen. Tim Carpenter  
3<sup>rd</sup> Senate District

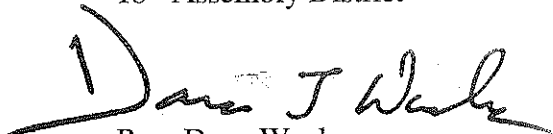
  
Sen. Lena Taylor  
4<sup>th</sup> Senate District

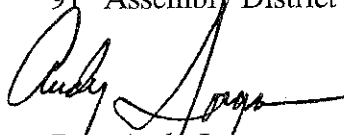
  
Rep. Mandela Barnes  
11<sup>th</sup> Assembly District


  
Rep. Christine Sinicki  
90<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

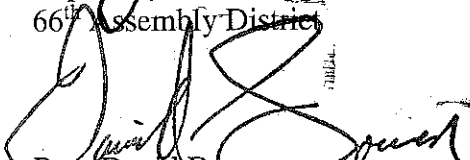
  
Rep. Dianne Hesselbein  
79<sup>th</sup> Assembly District


  
Rep. Evan Goyke  
18<sup>th</sup> Assembly District


  
Rep. Dana Wachs  
91<sup>st</sup> Assembly District

  
Rep. Andy Jorgenson  
43<sup>rd</sup> Assembly District


  
Rep. Cory Mason  
66<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

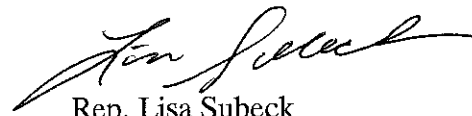
  
Rep. David Bowen  
10<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

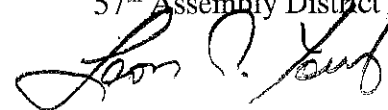
  
Sen. Julie Lassa  
24<sup>th</sup> Senate District


  
Rep. Peter Barca  
64<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

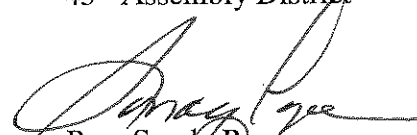
  
Rep. Nick Milroy  
73<sup>rd</sup> Assembly District

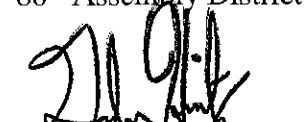
  
Rep. Chris Danou  
92<sup>nd</sup> Assembly District

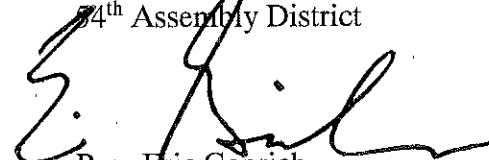
  
Rep. Lisa Subeck  
57<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

  
Rep. Leon Young  
16<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

  
Rep. Mark Spreitzer  
45<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

  
Rep. Soudy Pope  
80<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

  
Rep. Gordon Hintz  
74<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

  
Rep. Eric Genrich  
90<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*Katrina Shankland*

Rep. Katrina Shankland  
71<sup>st</sup> Assembly District

*Jill Billings*

Rep. Jill Billings  
95<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*L. Johnson*

Rep. LaTonya Johnson  
17<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*T. Ohnstad*

Rep. Tod Ohnstad  
65<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*D. Riemer*

Rep. Daniel Riemer  
7<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*Robb Kahl*

Rep. Robb Kahl  
47<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*Debra Kolste*

Rep. Deb Kolste  
47<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*JoCasto Zamarripa*

Rep. JoCasto Zamarripa  
8<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*Dave Considine*

Rep. Dave Considine  
81<sup>st</sup> Assembly District

*Gary Hebl*

Rep. Gary Hebl  
46<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*Chris Taylor*

Rep. Chris Taylor  
76<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*Josh Zepnick*

Rep. Josh Zepnick  
9<sup>th</sup> Assembly District