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CAVALIER JOHNSON

ALDERMAN, 2ND DISTRICT

What we need: A broad and holistic approach focused on prevention

Statement from Alderman Cavalier Johnson May 9, 2017

For years, the conversation around criminal justice has too often given way to harsher penalties. There's this idea that if we as a society simply lock more people away, the criminal element will be erased from our neighborhoods. We don't have to look very far to see the folly of that logic. Milwaukee, our city, the anchor of our greater community and the economic engine of our state, is home to the most incarcerated ZIP code in the United States. By that logic, 53206, a ZIP code where I spent the formative years of my life, should be a shining city on a hill and a beacon of hope filled with prosperity, and unyielding resolve that Wisconsin and America's policies of placing more people behind bars for longer periods of time is the ultimate public safety solution.

But that isn't the story of that area. From what I have heard from the Milwaukee Police Department is that the relatively small ZIP code represents about 10 percent of crime in the city. In fact, the police have zeroed in on 53206 with a "Center Street Corridor" strategy focused on tackling those issues – issues that shouldn't be present at all today if locking people away for long periods of time is the answer. With one in eight African American men in Wisconsin currently behind bars (which by the way is nearly double the national average) and half of Black men spending some time inside of a cell by the time they are 30 years old, I believe that it's safe to say that we should be looking in a different direction.

Today the Milwaukee Common Council passed a resolution encouraging leaders in the State Legislature to consider a different approach to public safety. Those recommendations (**attached**) call for the State to consider not only reforming the broken juvenile justice system but also to make investments on the front end so that more Wisconsin citizens never have contact with the corrections system in the first place.

I, and I'm certain my colleagues on the Council, realize that people who habitually engage in criminal acts require sanction. There should be accountability for actions. Many of us are sensitive to issues of crime because they happen in our districts and sometimes to law abiding citizens that we represent. But we also represent those who have been jailed time and again and we know that approach simply has not worked.

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Much like the roads that we all drive on, each of us makes investments via our tax dollars in our fellow citizens. I believe that we can get the most bang for our buck if we proactively invest in quality education including early childhood education, trauma informed care, and focus on connecting more people to living wage jobs that help to stabilize families and neighborhoods. Taxpayers win when everyone has a chance to positively contribute to our society instead of paying to house and feed people in a system that doesn't do a well enough job at rehabilitating perpetrators and reducing recidivism. If those in Madison are serious about making neighborhoods safer, then their views on public safety should not be narrowly focused on increased incarceration. Instead, our focus should be broader and encompass the root causes of poverty and crime.

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Legislation Details (With Text)

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Sponsors: ALD. KOVAC, ALD. STAMPER, ALD. PEREZ, ALD. HAMILTON, ALD. JOHNSON, ALD. LEWIS, ALD. BAUMAN

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Attachments:

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result	Tally
4/18/2017	0	COMMON COUNCIL	ASSIGNED TO		
4/24/2017	0	JUDICIARY & LEGISLATION COMMITTEE	HEARING NOTICES SENT		
5/1/2017	0	JUDICIARY & LEGISLATION COMMITTEE	RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION	Pass	4:1
5/1/2017	1	CITY CLERK	Sponsor added		
5/9/2017	1	COMMON COUNCIL	ADOPTED	Pass	13:1

170091
SUBSTITUTE 1

ALD. KOVAC, STAMPER, PEREZ, HAMILTON, JOHNSON, LEWIS AND BAUMAN
Substitute resolution relating to the City of Milwaukee’s position on County, State and Federal legislation intended to reduce incarceration and violence.

This resolution seeks introduction and passage of legislation at County, State and Federal levels to both reduce the incarceration of Milwaukee residents and to reduce violence in Milwaukee. The City also supports a set of guiding policies as a means of both reducing the incarceration of Milwaukee residents and reducing violence in Milwaukee.

Whereas, The number of adults incarcerated in Wisconsin State correctional facilities increased from 6,967 in 1990 to 22,729 in 2016, a 226% increase, while the overall population of Wisconsin increased during the same period by only 17%; and

Whereas, African-Americans comprise 6.6% of Wisconsin’s population but 42% of the men and 24% of the women incarcerated in Wisconsin State correctional facilities; and

Whereas, As of the 2010 U.S. Census, 12.6%, or one in 8, African-American working-age men in Wisconsin were incarcerated, nearly double the 6.7% average rate in the United States, while at the same time the rate of incarceration of working-age Caucasian men in Wisconsin was virtually identical to the average rate across the United States, at 1.2%; and

Whereas, 69% of the African-American residents of Wisconsin reside in Milwaukee County; and

Whereas, According to a report by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, between 1990 and 2012, 26,222 African-American men from Milwaukee County were incarcerated in Wisconsin State correctional facilities; and

Whereas, Incarceration disrupts families and communities, and a record of incarceration is a significant barrier to subsequent employment; and

Whereas, County, State and Federal funds would be better invested in crime and violence prevention than in incarceration and punishment; now, therefore be it

Resolved, By the Common Council of the City of Milwaukee, that the City of Milwaukee seeks introduction and passage of legislation at County, State and Federal levels to both reduce the incarceration of Milwaukee residents and to reduce violence in Milwaukee; and, be it

Further Resolved, That the City supports the following guiding policies as a means of both reducing the incarceration of Milwaukee residents and reducing violence in Milwaukee:

1. Doing away with mandatory minimum sentences and returning to sentencing discretion, which allows judges to bring the full force of the criminal justice system to rehabilitate offenders, rather than to lock offenders away regardless of circumstance.
2. Treating youths who offend, especially first-time offenders, as deserving of compassion, help and intervention rather than as hardened criminals deserving of being locked up.
3. Reforming the juvenile justice system in Milwaukee County to ensure that youths are receiving sufficient and appropriate counseling, rehabilitation, alternative rehabilitation and other supportive measures prior to and after adjudication, as well as minimizing any procedural delays between initial arrest and adjudication.
4. Ending the practice of sending Milwaukee's serious juvenile offenders to Lincoln Hills School, a troubled facility more than 200 miles away from Milwaukee youths' families, communities and support networks, and instead detaining serious juvenile offenders in a local setting for rehabilitation.
5. Increasing cooperation and information-sharing between the Police Department, other City agencies and Milwaukee County partners to ensure that the Police Department is supported in its mission; this should include information-sharing between:
 - Trauma-informed care specialists
 - Public health professionals
 - The Office of Violence Prevention
 - Mentor programs
 - Educators
6. Re-prioritizing the State budget to decrease the share of funding that is sent to the Wisconsin Department of Corrections and re-direct those funds into departments and

programs that work to prevent crime and violence, including health, education, housing, public transit expansion and job development.

7. Re-focusing State and local bodies, including the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, on recruiting and growing businesses that provide family-supporting jobs in the Milwaukee area, rather than along the Milwaukee-Kenosha I-94 corridor.
8. Expanding and improving public transit options for Milwaukee residents between Milwaukee and family-supporting jobs located in the surrounding counties.
9. Increasing the amount of shared revenue returned to the City from the State to a level which would cover the City's police and fire department budgets, as was historically the case.
10. Increasing federal Community Development Block Grant funding, which helps the City to expand economic opportunities for residents, and creating a state fund to supplement federal Community Development Block Grant funding.
11. Reforming the State of Wisconsin's voucher school program so that voucher schools are held to the same quality of education standards as public schools, ensuring that the City's children attending voucher schools receive the quality education that they are entitled to, and that will allow them to achieve their highest potential.
12. Bringing back a full complement of courses in music, the arts, and technical training to public schools in the Milwaukee area so that youths receive a complete, well-rounded education.

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April 28, 2017