



MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

FROM: Sarah Diedrick-Kasdorf, Deputy Director of Government Affairs

DATE: January 30, 2020

SUBJECT: Opposition to Assembly Bill 806

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) opposes Assembly Bill 806, relating to acts for which a juvenile may be placed in a correctional placement or the Serious Juvenile Offender Program.

Beginning July 1, 2021, the responsibility for providing juvenile correctional placements for non-Serious Juvenile Offenders transfers from the state to counties with the closure of Lincoln Hills/Copper Lake Schools and the opening of county-operated secured residential care centers for children and youth (SRCCCYs). Four counties submitted grant applications to operate SRCCCYs, with a total bed capacity of 117 beds; however, the Juvenile Corrections Grant Committee estimated the bed space need at 177 beds. Therefore, utilizing current statutory requirements for correctional placements, counties are 60 beds short of what is needed to meet the demand. Assembly Bill 806 will exacerbate this bed shortage by making additional youth eligible for a correctional placement. When this bill was introduced last session, the state was responsible for providing correctional beds; in 17 months, that becomes a county responsibility. Counties cannot and will not be in a position to provide the increased correctional bed space needed if this bill passes for a number of reasons, including the financial risk involved in creating bed capacity that may or may not be used.

In addition, counties are opposed to this legislation as it is in direct conflict with evidence-based practices. Counties are working toward keeping youth out of corrections, focusing more on community-based options with a track record of long-term success. Placing youth that have been adjudicated of lower-class felonies in a correctional setting may do harm to the youth, as opposed to being rehabilitative in nature.

WCA respectfully requests your opposition to Assembly Bill 806.

Thank you for considering our comments.