

Wisconsin Justice Initiative



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**Wisconsin Justice Initiative statement on Common Council's Public Safety Action Plan
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Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the proposed Public Safety Action Plan. The Wisconsin Justice Initiative (WJI) respectfully requests that public hearings on promised additional elements of the plan be held *before* their release, rather than after. This early version of the Action Plan would have benefited greatly from broader public input before its release.

The plan thus far is deeply flawed. It is unaffordable and puts too much emphasis on control and coercion. This plan also is poorly documented. It does not cite sources for its revenue estimates or many of its assertions. Its authors remain anonymous. WJI requests that the plan be revised to include the authors' names and full sourcing of its content to allow deeper analysis.

The proposal to add 280 officers to the payroll would cost \$31.7 million per year by the fifth year of implementation, according to the city budget office. The \$40,000 per-student per-year boarding school concept recommended in the plan is designed for students from highly motivated families, not the incarcerated juveniles envisioned by the plan's authors. The plan seeks to shift some implementation costs to others, including Milwaukee Public Schools and Municipal Court defendants, questionable tactics at best. The latter would only send the city further down the road to becoming another fine-them-til-it-hurts Ferguson.

The plan proposes to add more officers and suggests furloughing other city employees. The authors apparently believe that making more arrests is better than maintaining library hours, and that additional field interviews are more valuable than additional immunizations. A healthy, vibrant city requires more than cops. Unfortunately, that is not reflected in this plan.

This document makes several expensive recommendations for other governmental units, but does not suggest how to pay for them. One of the recommendations is for a judicial oversight program to carry on ill-defined court monitoring duties. WJI strongly recommends that city officials worry less about controlling state courts not in their purview and concentrate instead on ensuring that Municipal Court, which *is* a city responsibility, functions fairly for all defendants.

This plan, in short, should not move forward until, minimally, it is rewritten to focus on factors under the city's control; disclose more information, including authors and sources; and incorporate promised elements of resident engagement, public education, community relations and job creation strategies.

Thank you.

WJI's mission is to improve the quality of justice in Wisconsin by educating the public about legal issues and encouraging civic engagement in and debate about the judicial system and its operation.