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**MEDIA RELEASE**

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***ACLU of Wisconsin urges legislators to support early inmate release to alleviate serious prison overcrowding***

Milwaukee – Wisconsin’s prisons are so overcrowded that they necessitate budget proposals to allow the early release of some eligible offenders into the community under supervision. Today, the American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin wrote to the co-chairs of the Legislature’s Joint Committee on Finance to describe the crisis in our prisons caused by overcrowding. “These budget proposals will address this crisis to the extent that they allow eligible offenders to leave prison for supervision in the community, thereby making the prisons less crowded, more manageable and less dangerous,” wrote ACLU of Wisconsin Executive Director Chris Ahmuty.

“We commend Governor Jim Doyle for facing reality and making a serious proposal, despite the predictable opposition from supporters of the untenable status quo. We can’t afford to waste tax dollars building more prisons, in effect supporting a ‘prison-industrial complex’,” Ahmuty said today.

Since 1991 Wisconsin’s prison population has tripled to over 22,000 men and women, a severely disproportionate number of whom are persons of color. The capacity of the prison system is a maximum of 18,000 prisoners.

“One of the most pernicious effects of overcrowding is that it makes the delivery of adequate medical services nearly impossible. Alleviating overcrowding and providing adequate space as well as enough health care workers, would at least give the system a chance,” Ahmuty added.

In the letter, Ahmuty reminded the legislators that “most prisoners will return to our communities.” He challenged them to envision a corrections system where prisoners have incentives to turn their lives around and follow the institution’s rules.

“The proposed sentence modifications and other program changes are long overdue. The ACLU believes all Wisconsin residents and taxpayers would be better off if the Legislature adopts them,” Ahmuty concluded.

The letter to Joint Finance Committee co-chairs Miller and Pocan is attached.