



# Invest to Improve Public Safety

The last few years have been a reckoning for communities across Wisconsin and the country around the issues of crime, law enforcement, and social justice.

Homicides and violent gun crime is on the rise. We must put together a real plan to reverse the rise in violent crime and give every community the safety, security, and healing they deserve. Everyone deserves to feel safe, no matter where they live.

After decades of financial cutbacks, our cities, villages, and towns are in desperate need of investments to improve health and safety outcomes that reduce violence, strengthen social services, and expand wellness programs that foster community healing.

Just like the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill is beginning to rebuild our crumbling public infrastructure, it's time to invest in rebuilding our public safety infrastructure. We need to ensure that cities and states have the funding, training, and knowledge to invest in proven tactics like street outreach, hospital-based intervention, and youth programming.

We need to rebuild partnerships between government, community organizations, the private sector, and most importantly, community members. Public Safety is more effective when we start focusing on addressing the causes of crime before it happens.

We need to create more economic opportunity through additional funding for job training and expanded after-school activities. We need to incentivize companies to pay family supporting wages, and we need to help more families own their homes which helps stabilize housing and deter crime. We need to reduce recidivism and help formerly incarcerated individuals reenter their communities with the resources and opportunities necessary to prevent them from turning back to criminal activity.

We need gun crime reduction strategies that focus law enforcement efforts on violent offenders, stopping the trafficking of illegal guns, and that make real investments in our communities to prevent gun violence.



Here in Wisconsin, we have seen Republicans run cynical campaigns criticizing “defunding the police” while the Republican-led State Legislature slashes public safety funding for our municipalities and counties for more than a decade. This has had a direct result in cutting back our police departments, fire departments, EMS services, and other critical services that help prevent crime before it happens.

You don’t make things stronger by cutting funding, you make things stronger by making targeted investments to make them better and more efficient. **I have never believed in defunding the police.** Instead, we must invest in training and tools, in recruiting and retaining, and making sure that the officers who police our streets are part of the community they serve in.

Right now, Congress can provide critical help to fight back against rising violent crime in our communities.

**We do not have to choose between public safety and justice. We can invest in protecting our communities, restore community trust in our police departments, and hold law enforcement accountable when they do not meet the needs of the citizens that they are sworn to protect.**

At the Milwaukee Bucks, I spearheaded the Buck’s corporate citizenship efforts to demonstrate that some things are bigger than basketball. I marched with local leaders to protest the police shooting of Jacob Blake, led the “Bucks Vote” initiative, and worked consistently to raise the level of the team’s racial and social justice activism.

Communities across Wisconsin and this country need help. It’s time for our federal government to partner with local leaders to invest in our cities, villages, and towns to put a stop to gun violence, decrease the disastrous effects crime is having on our neighborhoods, and invest in the public safety of our communities.



## **Pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act**

Throughout this campaign, I have spoken out repeatedly about my commitment to the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. It's time for the Senate to do its job and pass these common sense policy changes that will build trust between law enforcement and their communities. We have waited far too long to see these recommendations voluntarily implemented by departments across the country and therefore, Congress must act to ensure these reforms are universally adopted.

## **Invest in Officer Safety, De-Escalation, and Domestic Violence Response Training**

We need to invest in officer training to make them more effective at their jobs. Additional training around diversity, cultural sensitivity, use of force, and mental illness will help officers identify and respond appropriately to the different situations they will encounter in the field. We also need to provide additional funding to ensure we aren't reducing on duty officers while others are at training by allowing a portion of the investments to be used as an offset for overtime pay.

We need to re-envision how we are policing in this country and part of that must include providing funding for community based intervention programs including group intervention programs, street outreach programs, and hospital-based violence intervention programs. Normally when this is discussed people only think about instances like drug related offenses or domestic violence cases, but there are programs that have been shown to be effective against all types of violence, including gun violence. We need to be providing funding and incentives for communities around the country to start moving towards incorporating this type of law enforcement.



## **Fund Universal Body Camera Data Storage and Security**

While the George Floyd Justice Act mandates the use of body cameras for local and state departments that accept federal funds, we also need to provide additional funding for both data storage and data security. We need to ensure that not only are body cameras used, but the resulting footage can be stored and protected.

We know body cameras work and the technology now allows for affordable universal equipment. Congress needs to mandate the use of body cameras on all sworn officers in the field nationwide to hold everyone accountable, in every situation.

## **Double Funding for the COPS Program**

We need to invest in crime prevention and help cities and towns hire additional police officers. I support President Biden's call to invest \$300 million to more than double the size of the Department of Justice's COPS community policing grant program. This is critical funding that helps maintain and grow police force sizes in communities across the state.

## **Put More Sworn Officers on the Streets**

In many police departments across the state and country, too many sworn officers are assigned to office duties that could be performed by a civilian worker. One of the most immediate and cost effective strategies to get more police officers on the streets is to ensure that as many sworn officers as possible are on patrol instead of behind a desk. Congress should help fund police departments' efforts that add civilian staff that directly results in more officers out on patrol.

## **Provide Grants for Smaller Departments to Add Officers**

Smaller departments are facing critical shortages in personnel. Congress should provide additional grant funding opportunities for small departments to recruit and retain officers. We need to allow for the funding to be used to provide retention bonuses to assist departments keep existing officers as well as add more officers to the departments. We should also incentivize local agencies to provide additional investments for officers who choose to pursue graduate degrees in public health, social work, and mental health that will help them do their jobs better.



## **Provide Mental Health Resources for Law Enforcement**

Like the rest of our society, our law enforcement agencies are dealing with suffering a mental health crisis. For years, we have asked law enforcement to deal with much more than simply enforcing the existing laws. We need to provide additional resources to ensure that the brave men and women of law enforcement have available access to mental health care services to obtain the help they need.

This also means we need to ensure that mental health resources are available everywhere, not just in large urban areas. We need to invest and promote more mental health treatment in rural communities across Wisconsin. As I spoke about in my [‘Strengthening Our Rural Communities’ Plan](#), we have a mental health crisis in this country and there’s nowhere with greater need than our rural communities that often lack any access to mental health services. We need the government to incentivize more mental health workers to locate in rural communities and we need to invest more into tele-medicine in order to bring additional services wherever they are needed.

## **Invest in Violence Prevention**

The best anti-violence programs are those programs that help stop violence before it ever begins. We need to provide more funding for municipalities to partner with community based organizations to support youth engagement and violence prevention programming that is designed to work in the community it serves. We need to ensure that funding is dedicated to respond directly to community crises, as well as healing and wellness-related programming.



## **Invest in Substance Abuse and Overdose Prevention**

The opioid epidemic continues to be a scourge on communities across our state and nation. While it has largely been overshadowed by the pandemic, COVID has made people have been more isolated and have not had access to the help they need, making the situation worse. We need to ensure that first responders can connect more residents with substance use treatment following an overdose.

Addiction is a significant underlying cause of recidivism. Because of that, we must pass a follow-up to the 2016 Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act. Expanding the funding to treat drug addiction for nonviolent offenders will reduce recidivism through onsite rehabilitation services and counseling, helping reduce crime, and keep our streets safer.

The 2016 bill was the first major federal addiction legislation in over four decades and was the most comprehensive effort undertaken to tackle the opioid epidemic. A bipartisan group of Senators has now suggested adding an additional \$1 billion to "support evidence-based prevention, enforcement, treatment, and recovery programs," which I fully support.

For far too long, big pharmacies and corporations have taken advantage of our communities, which has led to addiction and crime in our communities. We have to step in to hold them accountable and provide communities with the resources they need to treat addiction.



## **Incentivize Communities to Use Drug Treatment Courts and Similar Programs**

Several communities in Wisconsin are having success with drug treatment courts including Milwaukee, La Crosse, and Pierce counties. Drug Treatment courts allow those who have committed offenses but may have an underlying addiction issue to receive treatment as an alternative to traditional incarceration. These programs are proven to decrease recidivism and the federal government can provide additional funding incentives to counties who implement these programs.

## **Pass Universal Background Checks**

We know that universal background checks are one of the easiest things that we can do to ensure that firearms do not fall into the wrong hands. Federal law currently does not apply to the millions of gun transfers conducted by unlicensed dealers at gun shows, online and through other unlicensed sales. Congress needs to close the “gun show loophole” ensuring that all transfers or sales of firearms, whether they are done by a licensed dealer or not, should require a criminal background check.

## **Impose Waiting Limits on the Purchase of Firearms**

It is also important that we create waiting period laws to prevent immediate acquisition of a purchased gun. Often gun violence is an impulsive decision, and a waiting period or “cool-down” time can help prevent impulsive gun violence.

Under current Default Proceed laws, gun sales that require background checks by the FBI can proceed after 3 business days whether the FBI has completed the background check or not. Waiting limit laws would provide the FBI with more time to complete the background check and prevent people who are not allowed to own firearms from possessing them.



## **Ban Assault Weapons**

Banning assault weapons and high capacity magazines are proven measures that reduce gun violence. We don't have to guess. Congress has a long history of enacting these policies going back to 1934 and they have worked. When Congress then let these measures lapse as a result of pressure from the gun lobby, we have seen deadly mass shootings and gun violence rates go up. Congress needs to enact a ban on all assault weapons and limits on large capacity magazines and ensure that it is done in a permanent manner.

## **Ban Ghost Guns**

The proliferation of guns that you can buy online, assemble at home, have no serial number, and that cannot be traced is a direct danger to communities. Current federal law allows for individuals to construct their own firearms at home using parts ordered online and a 3D printer. Because these "ghost guns" lack serial numbers, law enforcement cannot trace them, and they are increasingly being trafficked and used in crime. I support President Biden's efforts to crack down on these weapons and believe that Congress needs to pass legislation that bans "ghost guns" and the ownership of any untraceable firearms at the federal level.

## **Pass the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act**

This is a critical bill that needs to be passed as soon as possible. The Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security, and FBI offices all have responsibility for monitoring domestic threats. We must combat and prevent racially motivated violent extremism that is a threat to all Americans. The bill authorizes all three agencies to help train and provide resources to assist state, local, and tribal law enforcement in "understanding, investigating, prosecuting, and deterring acts of domestic terrorism."



## **Enact the Federal Extreme Risk Protection Order Act.**

Nineteen states and the District of Columbia have extreme risk protection orders, sometimes called 'red flag' laws, currently in place. These laws enable family members and/or law enforcement to obtain an 'extreme risk protection order' to temporarily remove firearms from those whom a judge has deemed a danger to themselves or society. This proposed legislation would set national standards to help de-escalate emergency situations and save lives. These laws have been passed in conservative and liberal states and are a proven way to intervene before an incident of gun violence.

## **Invest in Urban Design Strategies that Deter Crime**

Studies show that reliable street lighting helps deter crime in our community. For too many communities, aging and outdated street light infrastructure is difficult to maintain and wastes a tremendous amount of energy compared to modern street light infrastructure. Congress should invest in modernized street lighting in our communities both as an investment in community safety and as a measure to help fight climate change.

Reckless driving is also on the rise in communities across our state, making people feel unsafe and leading to additional accidents and deaths. We should invest in roadway improvement efforts that help redesign roads, bike lanes, and sidewalks to slow traffic and protect pedestrians and bicyclists. Programs like Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson's 'Complete Streets' will help cut down on reckless driving and make it safe, enjoyable, and convenient to walk, bike, drive, or enjoy public spaces – no matter one's age or ability. The Bipartisan Infrastructure made a downpayment on some of these improvements, but much more needs to be done.



## **Expand Afterschool Programs**

We need to expand funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC) program. The 21CCLC is a proven program that helps create community based centers that provide an array of programming like tutoring, homework help, and community service, as well as music, arts, sports, and cultural activities. This is currently the only federal program solely dedicated to fund after school programming. Federal funds are distributed by states through a competitive bid process, but demand outstrips available funds. Only 1 in 3 requests for funding is awarded.

We also need to work with organizations that are already doing work on the ground in Wisconsin to educate them and make sure that they are aware of federal grant funding that may be available to them.

## **Provide Career Pathways for Residents with Criminal Records**

The reality of having an arrest and conviction record, even when the individual has satisfied the requirements of the state, often sees them re-penalized again and again. We have to change that.

These practices affect millions of workers. We need to eliminate barriers to employment for people with arrest and conviction records including passing clean slate legislation at the federal and state level and advancing reforms to help more people access jobs, including passing more 'ban the box' laws at the state level.

We also need to expand and make permanent the Second Chance Pell experiment that provides education opportunities through colleges and universities to prison based education programs with support from the Pell Grant program. The current experiment is allowing thousands of justice-involved individuals access federal need-based financial aid for education that was previously unavailable. Providing education in prisons has proven that it reduces recidivism, improves post-incarceration employment rates, and helps individuals reintegrate and contribute to their communities.



## **Legalize Marijuana and Expunge Criminal Records of People Convicted for Possession**

No one should be put behind bars solely for possession of marijuana. It's high-time for the federal legalization of marijuana, and with it, the expungement of prior minor possession charges.

In many parts of America our local jails are significantly over capacity, many of them due to the detainment of non-violent offenders that have been convicted of marijuana possession. Our country spends over \$3 billion annually to incarcerate drug-related offenses.

This is a significant problem nationally, and a problem that has disproportionately affected our communities of color – which has led to unfair long-term imprisonments and lifetimes of poverty. Despite similar usage of drugs between white and black communities, black people are ten times more likely to be incarcerated for drug-related offenses. We must legalize marijuana and expunge the prior convictions that have devastated these communities for far too long.

Not only is legalizing marijuana and expunging these prior convictions the right thing to do, but economically it makes sense too. All of our surrounding states have passed some form of legalization. We can drive our economy forward by investing in the local businesses that will help us create this industry from the ground up—bringing more jobs and economic opportunity to the people of Wisconsin.