

WISDOM

25th Anniversary

Menīkānaehkem ★

★ JONAH

★ NAOMI

JOSHUA ★

ESTHER ★

RUTH ★

MOSES ★

MICAH ★
SOPHIA ★
(Statewide)

FREE ★

RIC ★

CUSH ★

★ JOB

Building a Beloved Community

Priorities for Wisconsin
2025-2027

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Racial Equity Statement	4
Prophetic Declaration	5
Our Values	6-8
WISDOM Affiliates	10-24

WISDOM ISSUES

25-47

Transformational Justice

✦ Free the Vote	25
✦ Expand the Earned Release Program (ERP)	26
✦ Treatment Alternatives and Diversions (TAD)	27
✦ Connecting Families	29
✦ Close a Prison	30
✦ Prison Oversight	31
✦ Community-Based Alternatives to Revocation (ATRs)	32
✦ Supporters of Incarcerated People (SIP)	34

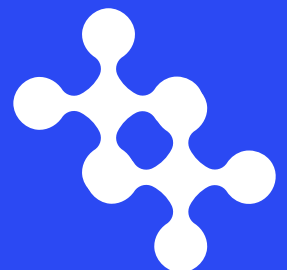


Table of Contents

Integrated Voter Engagement (IVE)	35
Regional Transportation Authority (RTA)	36
Driver's Licenses for All	37
Mental Health	38
Housing	39
Childcare	40
Living Wage	42
Public School Funding	43
Language Literacy	44
Rights of Nature	45
Environmental Justice	46
Medicaid	47
Lead Poisoning	48
Contact Us	49



Racial Equity Statement

Racial equity is a core value of WISDOM and its affiliates and is practiced in everything we do.

- Diverse voices, viewpoints, opinions, thoughts, and ideas are actively encouraged and embraced throughout our organization.
- A culture of deep and authentic relationships throughout WISDOM and its affiliates fosters a sense of restored community and mutual caring.
- Our commitment to racial equity promotes a just, fair, respectful, inclusive, and thriving community for everyone in our organization and in the institutions, we seek to improve.

WISDOM and its affiliates, and participants individually, are open and responsive to constructively given feedback about racist attitudes or behaviors we may display, however unintentional.

- Mistakes are courageously and forthrightly identified. We will graciously “call each other in” and describe and discuss mistakes with clarity as part of a continuous education process.
- Patience, genuine caring, and compassionate listening are practiced in our mutual effort to understand oppression, both overt and systemic.

WISDOM and its affiliates are characterized by an intentional identity as an antiracist institution.

- Our antiracist identity permeates our organizational culture, values, norms, and behaviors.
- Diverse racial, cultural, and economic groups enjoy full participation and shared power in all aspects of our mission, structure, constituency, policies, and practices.
- People of color lead in the work we do and are always at the tables where decisions that affect us get made.



Prophetic Declaration

We are people of faith united by our passion for justice, commitment to community and a practice of hope. We stand together understanding that our lives and destinies are intertwined.

- We come together because God calls us into relationship with one another, with our communities and with the world around us.
- We come together from across the state, across faith traditions, across race, class, gender and ethnicity, and across many divides that might ordinarily keep us apart.
- We come together around core faith convictions that affirm our direction and shape our vision for the future.
- We come together to act for justice, build power and to transform our communities, cities and state.

We stand together in our faith:

- We believe in the God-given dignity and infinite worth of each and every human life
- We believe that we are each and all part of a sacred community, to which we have responsibility and from which we gain sustenance.
- We believe that our faith calls us to work for justice and liberation, standing against all forms of oppression and inequity.
- We believe we are called to be stewards of the natural world in all its bounty and diversity.
- We believe in shared abundance and stand against the dominant culture of reckless consumption and consumerism for some and deprivation for others.
- We believe in the triumph of love and hope over hate and fear.

We build power and act together, drawing courage and inspiration from our faith. We believe God has called us to live, speak and act courageously in accordance with our faith beliefs. Together we will create the community we seek for ourselves, but also build the power we need to transform the world around us. We will build the relationships and strategic capacity we need to powerfully engage and impact public decisions.

Together we declare:

Where there is division, we declare unity.
Where there is hatred, we declare love.
Where there is lack, we declare abundance.
Where there is desolation, we declare renewal.
Where there is discouragement, we declare hope.
Where there is lack of strength, we declare power!

OUR VALUES

Radical Inclusion

"Radical inclusion is a value centered in the Creator who refuses to draw lines and instead longs for all to be drawn together"

By Rev. Boyle-Rohloff

There is no person or piece of creation that does not bear the Creator's imprint. Yet we often struggle to honor the Creator in how we treat one another. As a child on the playground, I remember drawing boundaries of who was in or out when it came to playing kickball or dodgeball. I also remember times I would be excluded and how that felt.

This behavior continues into adulthood. It shows up in how we organize access to housing, education, or healing. We can continue to draw lines of division due to gender, race, sexual orientation, language, income, and the list can go on and on. We can find ourselves, our communities, our places of worship practicing exclusion, which causes harm to ourselves and others.

Radical inclusion is practice that moves us toward community healing. It can be uncomfortable though to live this out. We know so well the practices of exclusion. Yet it is more than possible for us to lean into a new way of being a community where all are included and recognized as beloved. It is very possible to form communities where exclusion is resisted so everybody is in- nobody is out.

The radical piece of this value means this is not just about letting people through "our door" or organization or community to be part of what we are already doing. It's about making space for one another's voices and gifts. It's about creating together a community where all are valued and therefore God is truly honored. Just and loving community is where God is going, and radical inclusion is a practice that will lead us there.



Costly Reconciliation

By Rev. Gloff

On September 30, 2021, Queen Elizabeth II, Canada's head of state, issued this message marking the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation: "I join with all Canadians on this first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to reflect on the painful history that Indigenous peoples endured in residential schools in Canada and on the work that remains to heal and to continue to build an inclusive society."

While many have heard of national reconciliation efforts in South Africa after the end of 300 years of Apartheid, most are unaware that similar efforts toward the quest for reconciliation are happening in North America as well. From 1883 - 1996, the Canadian government separated indigenous children from their parents and placed them in boarding schools run primarily by Christian churches. The schools were designed to strip the children of their native languages and cultures.

*"It is not enough to say
we are sorry if we are
not willing to give back
some of the wealth and
privilege that injustice
has unfairly
distributed."*

From 2008 to 2015 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission—established by the Canadian government-- concluded that the attempt to forcefully assimilate Indigenous communities was a cultural genocide.

The Canadian government discussed the merits of a national holiday to acknowledge and apologize and repair the damage done to their indigenous citizens for years. On May 28, 2021, the day after it was reported that the remains of 215 children's bodies were discovered in an unmarked cemetery on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School, all parties in the House of Commons agreed to fast-track the bill. It passed in the House and the Senate unanimously

The official tagline of Canada's National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is, "Every Child Matters". In WISDOM we might paraphrase that tagline slightly: "Beloved Community Matters". We continue to strive for the day when every adult and every child of every culture knows that they matter; then reconciliation will truly flourish.

Costly reconciliation demands that we look honestly at damage that has been done to so many people in our own country: Native American people, African-American people, LGBTQIA+ people, people with disabilities, exploited workers, and so many more. We are called not just to recognize the harm that has been done, but to take real steps to provide a remedy. It is not enough to say we are sorry if we are not willing to give back some of the wealth and privilege that injustice has unfairly distributed.

OUR VALUES

Living for the Seventh Generation

By David Liners

“Living for the Seventh Generation” is an extension of WISDOM’s value of Radical Inclusion. The Beloved Community not only transcends race, gender and national origin; it transcends time.

It is a call to take the long view. We have inherited the benefits and the mistakes, the virtuous acts and the sins of many, many people who went before us, and after our brief time on the stage there will be many, many more. Our acts will be felt by them.

How would a seventh-generation mindset see the opening of a sulfide mine, which might operate profitably for a few decades, while creating environmental damage that will take 10,000 years to heal? If we shortchange today’s school children, how will that impact the generations that come behind them? We know that unnecessary incarceration does great damage to the children of the incarcerated. And so on.

It requires investing in the future. In the short term, it might be costly to protect our planet from further harm, or to offer opportunities for a great education, mental and physical health care for everyone, sustainable transportation infrastructure and more.

Those investments don’t provide a monetary return in the same year or the same election cycle. They are investments in future generations.

Our faith traditions all teach us that we all belong to each other in the Beloved Community. To be one’s brother’s (and sister’s) keeper is to be concerned about many generations of biological and spiritual nieces and nephews as well.

WISDOM celebrates 25 years this year. That was one generation. Can we imagine an organization that will live on as a champion for justice for another six generations? How will we act when we see ourselves as people who carry the baton for one lap, and get ready to pass it to the next carrier? They won’t do things in the same ways we have. They will see different challenges and different opportunities we can’t even imagine. Our job is to pass on our deepest values, embedded in a community that seeks to include everyone and let future generations do even greater things.



“The Beloved Community not only transcends race, gender and national origin; it transcends time.”



Affiliates

- CUSH (Congregations United to Serve Humanity – Kenosha County)
- ESTHER (Empowerment Solidarity Truth Hope Equity Reform – Fox Valley)
- FREE (Statewide)
- JOB (Justice Overcoming Borders – Beloit)
- JONAH (Joining Our Neighbors, Advancing Hope – Eau Claire)
- JOSHUA (Justice Organization Sharing Hope & United for Action – Green Bay)
- MICAHA (Milwaukee Inner-city Congregations Allied for Hope)
- Menikanaehkem (“Community Re-Builders” – Menominee Reservation)
- MOSES (Madison Organizing in Strength, Equity and Solidarity)
- NAOMI (North central Area congregations Organizing to Make Impact – Wausau)
- RIC (Racine Interfaith Coalition)
- RUTH (Responding with Understanding, Truth and Hope – Manitowoc)
- SOPHIA (Stewards of Prophetic Hopeful Intentional Action – Waukesha County)



Did you know?

MICAHA is WISDOM's oldest affiliate, established in 1990.



Part of a larger network

WISDOM is part of the national Gamaliel Network, which has organizations in 14 states.



CUSH (CONGREGATIONS UNITED TO SERVE HUMANITY)

CUSH is an interfaith coalition dedicated to living out its faith and values in pursuit of justice through advocacy, education, and empowerment. Guided by a deep respect for the dignity and worth of all human beings, CUSH celebrates and promotes diverse communities while honoring integrity and maintaining accountability. The coalition is committed to building strong relationships among its members and believes in advocating for the common good through action. Founded in 1998 by religious leaders inspired by WISDOM, CUSH officially formed in 2000 with ten congregations, using congregation-based community organizing to combat poverty, racism, and injustice.

Notable Highlights

- ★ They formed a Rapid Response Team to combat the distribution of Anti-Semitic pamphlets, earning an award from the ACLU.
- ★ The Religious Leaders' Caucus brought shalom to the community through prayer vigils during the 2020 riots.
- ★ They also facilitated shelter for the homeless by coordinating efforts with the county and the city, funding hotel vouchers, and securing hotels that would accept them.

CUSH

At A Glance

Founded 1998

Area Served

Kenosha City and Kenosha County

Contact Info

Website:

Email: admin@cushkenosha.com

Phone: (815) 669 2869

P.O. Box 1324

Kenosha, W.I. 53140

Social Media

FB: @CUSHkenosha

IG: @cushkenosha1

TikTok: @cushkenosha



ESTHER (EMPOWERMENT SOLIDARITY TRUTH HOPE EQUITY REFORM)

Rooted in the values of Empowerment, Solidarity, Truth, Hope, Equity, and Reform, ESTHER unites faith communities, organizations, and individuals to build relationships, address economic and social injustices, and create a more inclusive and just society. The organization has taken a leadership role in tackling issues such as housing insecurity, immigrant rights, criminal justice reform, public transit accessibility, and environmental justice. Through advocacy, community organizing, and education, ESTHER has amplified the voices of marginalized communities and fostered a network of grassroots leaders committed to change.

Notable Highlights

- ★ Led efforts to improve immigration access, including advocating for driver's licenses for undocumented individuals and working with local law enforcement to reduce discriminatory traffic stops
- ★ Preserved federal funding for public transit in the Fox Valley and continues to drive initiatives on affordable housing and voter registration within immigrant communities.

ESTHER At A Glance

Founded 2009

Area Served

Outagamie and Winnebago Counties

Contact Info

Website: www.jonahjustice.org

Email: office@esther-foxvalley.org

Phone: (920) 843-8083

108 W Doty Ave,
Neenah, WI 54956

Social Media

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/esther.foxvalley/>

IG: @esther.foxvalley





FREE (RECLAIMING WOMEN'S FREEDOM)

FREE is an organization by and for justice-impacted women and girls, focused on addressing incarceration and reentry through systems change. They engage directly impacted, allied, and community members to drive policy change and public education on gender-specific issues. With chapters in Dane County, Milwaukee County, and the Chippewa Valley, they offer trainings, fellowships, and Circles of Support, fostering personal and professional growth. They also collaborate with WISDOM's Transformational Justice campaign to ensure women's voices are included in discussions on incarceration.

★ Notable Highlights

- ★ Advocated for ending the shackling of pregnant women in jails and prisons, ensuring comprehensive care for pregnant and postpartum women. A recent success is the partnership with the Ostara Initiative to launch a doula program at Taycheedah Correctional Institute.
- ★ Addressed housing insecurity for women in reentry through "Housing4All Campaign" by conducting studies on barriers faced by formerly incarcerated individuals and working with WISDOM and other partners to create new housing policies at the state and local levels.

FREE

At A Glance

Founded 2016

Area Served

Statewide

Contact Info

Email: hello@freemvmnt.org

Phone: (414) 831-2070

2821 N Vel Phillips Avenue, Ste 117
Milwaukee, WI, 53212

Social Media

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/freeWI2018>



JOB (JUSTICE OVERCOMING BORDERS)

Justice Overcoming Borders (JOB) of Rock County's primary purpose is to create strong coalitions of ordinary people to powerfully engage and impact public decisions. JOB was formed in the early 2000's and the original CBCO (Church Based Community Organizing Model) was subsequently adapted to include individuals and other organizations that share our values and goals seeking systemic change for the common good, and to overcome the root causes of poverty and injustice in our local communities and beyond.

★ Notable Highlights

- ★ Lead efforts in 2006 to prevent the expansion of the Rock County Jail and has consistently promoted community-based treatment and alternatives to incarceration through initiatives like Treatment Alternatives and Diversions (TAD).
- ★ Emphasized on racial equity, holding a Beloit city-wide retreat in 2021, and is set to update its strategic racial equity plan in 2025-26 to guide all future initiatives, with an emphasis on holding the School District of Beloit accountable for its equity goals.

JOB At A Glance

Founded 2000

Area Served

Much of our work is in the Beloit Community, but plan to be active in all of Rock County, including the Rock County Board of Supervisors.

Contact Info

Website: justiceovercomingborders.com
Email: contact@justiceovercomingborders.com
Phone: 608-921-7650

2302A DeKoven Ave.
Racine, WI 53403

Social Media

FB @justiceovercomingborders





JONAH (JOINING OUR NEIGHBORS, ADVANCING HOPE)

JONAH envisions a just society by collaborating, empowering, and taking action to address critical social issues affecting the Chippewa Valley. Our mission focuses on deepening relationships, expanding grassroots participation, developing leadership skills, and shifting public narratives to tackle the root causes of injustice. We are committed to raising awareness, fostering civil discourse, and training leaders to build a more equitable, thriving community for all.

Notable Highlights

- ★ Organized a public transportation rally with over 100 attendees, leading to 11 elected officials signing a pledge to expand transit access and support Regional Transit Authorities
- ★ Launched the Plastic Free Eau Claire campaign and held a major Earth Week Open House with 50 partner organizations
- ★ Introduced the first Justice Film Fest and Telling Stories Through Art event to foster community dialogue on social justice issues

JONAH

At A Glance

Founded 2007

Area Served

Rural areas of Dunn, Chippewa, and Eau Claire counties and the expanding urban center of Eau Claire

Contact Info

Website: www.jonahjustice.org

Email: cvjonahorganizer@gmail.com

Phone: (715) 497-8732

2233 Golf Rd.
Eau Claire, WI 54701

Social Media

FB: @jonahcv

IG: @jonah_cv





JOSHUA (JUSTICE ORGANIZATION SHARING HOPE & UNITED FOR ACTION)

JOSHUA envisions a fair and equitable future where everyone in Northeast Wisconsin is an active participant in building a strong and healthy community. Founded in 2004, JOSHUA's mission inspires and equips people to address systemic justice issues through collaboration across public and private sectors. With a focus on equity, education, advocacy, and racial and social justice, JOSHUA has played a key role in establishing drug courts in Brown County and advocating for the closure of Green Bay Correctional Institution.

Notable Highlights

- ★ Reignited its Housing and Environmental Justice Task Forces, hosting events like the Housing Policy Institute training and promoting Wisconsin Salt Wise Smart Salt Week to address community issues.
- ★ Led monthly Prayer Vigils on violence, prison conditions, and election day safety, and organized a bipartisan event and panel discussion at St. Norbert's College to close Green Bay Correctional Institution.
- ★ Supported immigrant and refugee resource centers through volunteer efforts and participation in events to provide essential aid to these communities.

JOSHUA At A Glance

Founded 2004

Area Served

Northeast Wisconsin--primarily Brown County but working closely with the Fox Valley and Manitowoc areas and expanding

Contact Info

Website: joshua4justice.org
Email: info@joshua4justice.org
Phone: (920) 222-2414

130 Saint Matthews St,
Green Bay, WI 54301

Social Media

FB / IG / TikTok:
[@JOSHUA4Justice](https://www.instagram.com/JOSHUA4Justice)



MICAH (MILWAUKEE INNER-CITY CONGREGATIONS ALLIED FOR HOPE)

MICAH was founded in 1988 as a multi-racial, interfaith organization dedicated to addressing justice issues that are crucial to the residents of Milwaukee city and county. We began with seven congregations committed to working together across denominational lines to focus on social justice. Today, MICAH is made up of 38 congregations and benefits from the support of a growing number of individuals and organizations. A core aspect of MICAH's work is the training and empowerment of leaders, enabling ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things within their congregations and communities.

★ Notable Highlights

- ★ Collaborated with other organizations to ensure St. Joseph's Hospital remained open, preserving vital healthcare services.
- ★ Led the Save Chaney Center Coalition, successfully advocating to keep the F. Lemar O. Chaney Correctional Center open.
- ★ Launched the "We All Belong" campaign and held a 700-person Rally for Democracy, while also advocating for health services restoration in the Metcalfe area, securing a future clinic opening in 2026.

MICAH

At A Glance

Founded 1988

Area Served

Milwaukee

Contact Info

Website: <https://micahmke.org/>

Email: office@micahmke.org

Phone: (414) 264-0805

2821 N Vel Phillips Ave, Suite 213
Milwaukee, WI 53212

Social Media

FB: MicahEmpowers



MENĪKĀNAEHKEM (MENOMINEE RE- BUILDERS)

Menikānaehkem is a grassroots community organization based on the Menominee Reservation, in Northeast Wisconsin working to revitalize their communities. They are a group made up of people who are all working toward the same goal, Community Wellness! Their love for their relatives is what drives our work and passion for the things that they do. They come together with one heart and one mind to work towards creating hope for our future, through connecting to our Identity and Spirit. They will do so with unclouded vision and determination; by honoring their differences and embracing their strengths as First Nations People.

★ Notable Highlights

- ★ Menikānaehkem leads with heart, fostering wellness and creating belonging within their community through healthy, loving relationships.
- ★ As a unified voice for their nation, Menikānaehkem empowers the community to stand together, showing that collective action can bring meaningful change.
- ★ By connecting to Land, Language, and Lineage, they strengthen their minds and live with purpose, sharing this wisdom with all their relatives.

MENĪKĀNAEHKEM

At A Glance

Founded 2017

Area Served

Menominee reservation and surrounding counties

Contact Info

Email:

Guy Anakwet Reiter
anahkwet@gmail.com

Dawn S' kew mōhkahtūkwaew Wilber
beaverwoman64@gmail.com

N8866 Cty Rd G
Gresham, WI, 54128





MOSES (MADISON ORGANIZING IN STRENGTH, EQUITY AND SOLIDARITY FOR CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM REFORM)

MOSES is dedicated to building collective power to dismantle systems of mass incarceration and mass supervision while addressing the racial disparities in the community that contribute to them. Unlike many WISDOM affiliates, MOSES primarily focuses on criminal legal system reform. While most of its members are part of faith communities, the organization also includes many unaffiliated individuals committed to social justice. In 2024, MOSES launched a multiyear effort to expand its membership by engaging with African American churches.

★ Notable Highlights

- ★ Held monthly public meetings for advocacy updates, breakout discussions, and testimonials on topics like restorative justice and the Dane County Deferred Prosecution Program.
- ★ Led Dane County task forces focusing on racial justice in schools and youth homelessness, while advocating for jail reform and equitable diversion programs.
- ★ Participated in all four WISDOM Transformational Justice Work Groups and plans to launch a new website in 2025 alongside regular newsletters.

MOSES At A Glance

Founded 2012

Area Served

Madison and Dane County

Contact Info

Website: mosesmadison.org
Email: info@mosesmadison.org,
organizer.moses.madison@gmail.com
Phone: 608-556-9830

PO Box 7031
 Madison, WI 53707

Social Media

FB: MOSES Madison: for Criminal Justice Reform







NAOMI (North Central Area Congregations Organized to Make an Impact)

Since 2010, NAOMI's Board of Directors has been dedicated to building a just future for North Central Wisconsin, prioritizing the needs of underrepresented groups, particularly immigrants and refugees in Wausau. As the organization enters its sixteenth year, the Board has conducted a strategic review to strengthen its efforts and address areas for improvement. NAOMI is also pleased to announce the addition of new members from Wausau Faith Communities and new Board members.

Notable Highlights

- ★ NAOMI has welcomed new members from the Wausau Faith Communities and added new members to its Board, enhancing its capacity for continued community impact.
- ★ In 2025, NAOMI will launch its first quarterly newsletter, covering organizational and community activities. The year's events include co-sponsoring the Martin Luther King Day Celebration, honoring Rosa Parks on Transit Equity Day, sending a bus of Wausau citizens to Madison Action Day, planting 25 trees for Earth Day, and sponsoring Wausau PRIDE, Wausau Culture Fest, and Juneteenth Day celebrations.

NAOMI

At A Glance

Founded 1993

Area Served

Wausau

Contact Info

Website: www.naomiwausau.org

Email: naomi4justice@yahoo.com

Phone: (920) 327-0251

330 McClellan St.
Wausau, WI 54403

Social Media

FB: @NAOMI4Justice





RIC (RACINE INTERFAITH COALITION)

RIC is made up of 27 congregations bound together by our shared commitment to fostering a more just, egalitarian, and fair community as well as our belief in the intrinsic worth of every person. Immigration, education, civic engagement, transformational justice, and environmental justice are just a few of the numerous community concerns that we organize around. We took part in numerous initiatives, such as court observation training, turn-up-the-vote campaigns, composting waste programs, and lead abatement education.

Notable Highlights

- ★ Gave 58 rides to the polls and DMV on Election Day, and distributed hundreds of voter materials to Racine locals to apprise them of crucial election-related facts, deadlines, and dates
- ★ Opened an immigration law clinic in Racine, partnered with the ECLA Outreach Center of Kenosha and provided 51 legal consultations in the Racine office since launched
- ★ Trained 7 court observers on the Racine County Circuit Court to understand disparities in factors that impact sentencing and mass incarceration

RIC At A Glance

Founded 1993

Area Served

Racine County area

Contact Info

Website: www.ricracine.org

Email: ricracine1993@gmail.com

Phone: (262) 635-9532

2302A DeKoven Ave.
Racine, WI 53403

Social Media

FB: @ricracine

IG: @racineinterfaithcoalition





RUTH At A Glance

Founded 2012

Area Served

Manitowoc County and Northeast Wisconsin
through JOSHUA

Contact Info

Website:

<https://www.facebook.com/ruthmanitowoc>

Email: ruth4justice@gmail.com

Social Media

FB: RUTH-Manitowoc

RUTH (RESPONDING WITH UNDERSTANDING, TRUTH AND HOPE)

RUTH is an interfaith justice organization in Manitowoc County and a member of JOSHUA. RUTH is an anti-racist organization. We are all brothers and sisters in the eyes of God. Treating all races with dignity and respect must be the basis of all public policies. This effort to support all races is a sign of the spirit of God who leads us all. We welcome the opportunity to join with community organizations in this effort to confront our systemic racism both locally and statewide to build awareness of the needs of our diverse populations and strengthen the reforms our values support.

★ Notable Highlights

- ★ Hosted a screening of "The Invisible Class" and "Hidden" to over 150 attendees, followed by First Lutheran Church launching a weekly meal program for those without a place to prepare food.
- ★ Participated in local initiatives, including prayer vigils at Green Bay Correctional, supporting emergency housing efforts, and advancing immigration reform through WISDOM's affiliates.
- ★ Partnered with JOSHUA to address housing issues and advocate for structural change to meet the needs of the unhoused, recommending Poverty by America for further insight.



SOPHIA (STEWARDS OF PROPHETIC HOPEFUL INTENTIONAL ACTION)

SOPHIA is a multifait organization dedicated to social justice in Waukesha County. Rooted in shared values, we unite people from diverse backgrounds to advocate for systemic change and work toward a more just and compassionate community. Through grassroots organizing, leadership development, and collective action, we strive to address the root causes of social and economic inequities.

★ Notable Highlights

- ★ Awarded the Bader Foundation grant to support affordable housing initiatives, with a key focus on voucher acceptance. This was a major topic at the landlord forum held in 2024.
- ★ Played a key role in shutting down the Huber facility in Waukesha and advocating for more humane implementation of the Huber Law, including the use of electronic monitoring as an alternative.
- ★ Reorganized the Immigration Task force in 2025. Focusing on connecting at-risk communities with critical resources and support.



SOPHIA

At A Glance

Founded 2004

Area Served

Waukesha County

Contact Info

Website: www.sophiawaukesha.org

Email: sophiawaukesha@gmail.com / organizer@sophiawaukesha.org

Phone: (414) 758-1148

100 E Broadway,
Waukesha, WI 53186

Social Media

FB: @SOPHIAjustice

IG: @SOPHIA_wi



Free The Vote

Voting is a fundamental right and a cornerstone of democracy, and allowing individuals on supervision (such as probation or parole) to vote is important for several reasons:

1. **Reintegration into Society:** Voting can help reintegrate individuals into their communities. It fosters a sense of belonging and responsibility, encouraging civic engagement and participation in society.
2. **Representation:** Everyone affected by laws and policies should have a say in the democratic process. Individuals on supervision are often directly impacted by decisions made at various levels of government. Allowing them to vote ensures their voices and perspectives are considered.
3. **Reducing Stigma:** Excluding individuals on supervision from voting perpetuates stigma and marginalization. Allowing them to vote can help challenge negative perceptions and promote a more inclusive society.
4. **Empowerment:** Voting empowers individuals to advocate for issues that matter to them, such as criminal justice reform, housing, and employment opportunities. It gives them a stake in the democratic process.
5. **Promoting Accountability:** When more people participate in elections, elected officials are more likely to be held accountable for their actions and policies. This can lead to better governance and policies that reflect the needs of all constituents.
6. **Historical Context:** Many social justice movements have fought for the rights of marginalized groups, including those with criminal records. Expanding voting rights aligns with these historical struggles for equality and justice.

Encouraging voting among individuals on supervision not only supports their rights but also strengthens democracy by ensuring a more representative and engaged electorate.

Expand Earned Release Program

Expand the Earned Release Program (ERP) is a six-month intensive, federally-approved program designed to address substance use disorders. Currently, there are thousands of people on the waiting list for this program. Thousands of people are already eligible to participate in the program because it was a part of their sentence. Many of them could earn their way home as much as three or four years earlier than would be possible without the program. In the meantime, each year of unnecessary incarceration costs taxpayers between \$44,000 - \$55,000. It is much less expensive to pay for expanded ERP programming.

ERP should be expanded to include vocational readiness programs. Expanding the Earned Release Program will provide a release valve allowing those who successfully complete it to return to their local support networks, to receive specialized treatment for their addictions, and remove some financial and personnel burdens from the overcrowded prison system.

We ask the legislature to:

Expand the Earned Release Program, as proposed in the Governor's budget, which will result in savings to taxpayers and reduced prison populations while making communities safer and families healthier.

Treatment Alternatives and Diversions (TAD)

The TAD program is one of the most cost-effective items in the Wisconsin state budget. The program:

- **Saves taxpayers more than \$4 for every \$1 that the state has invested and**
- **Enhances public safety by reducing recidivism and strengthening communities**

TAD funds allow counties to establish or expand proven programs and interventions that divert people from jail or prison and into alternative programming. TAD-funded programs have also proven to be more effective than incarceration for reducing recidivism.

TAD-funded programs are currently available only to individuals with alcohol and drug addiction. By allowing counties to use TAD funding for mental health treatment, we can provide additional treatment options and avoid incarcerating Wisconsin residents experiencing mental health problems.

Expanding TAD programming will contribute both to public safety and to a more cost-effective criminal legal system.

We ask the legislature to:

Significantly increase TAD funding and increase eligibility to TAD-funded programs.

Connecting Families

Communication with loved ones outside interrupts the toxicity of prisons and jails that reproduces harm and creates despair. One in three families with an incarcerated loved one goes into debt trying to maintain contact while enriching predatory correctional telecom corporations. Regular communication with support systems allows incarcerated people to plan for release, which includes securing housing and employment, two critical needs for people coming home. However, correctional telecom corporations enjoy monopoly contracts over prisons and jails, ensuring that incarcerated people and their families have no choice in which service provider they use or what rates they pay. No matter whether someone is behind bars or not, we all deserve to communicate with our loved ones without going into debt to connect with the people that matter most to us. Together, we can fight to make Communication Services free of charge for Incarcerated Loved Ones and their families in Wisconsin.

**Scan me to
learn more**







Close A Prison

WISDOM opposes the construction of any new prisons. We have consistently proposed solutions that would enable Wisconsin policymakers to close a prison without building any new prisons.

Many Republicans and many Democrats now agree that Green Bay Correctional Institution (GBCI) must be closed as soon as possible. In order to close GBCI without building a new prison, legislators must reduce the prison population by advancing common sense decarceration policies. Expanding funding for the Treatment Alternatives and Diversions (TAD) program, the Earned Release Program (ERP), and community-based options for the Alternatives to Revocation Program will enable thousands of people to be liberated from incarceration. A wide body of research demonstrates that these programs save money, enhance public safety, improve public health outcomes, and reduce the likelihood that people will return to prison for committing a new crime.

It's time to reallocate resources in Wisconsin to build safer, stronger, and healthier communities.



Our Ask

Close Green Bay Correctional Institution without building a new prison and expand programs that will liberate thousands of people from prisons and jails.

Prison Oversight

The Ladies of SCI strongly advocate for the creation of an Ombudsman model of oversight over the Department of Corrections. An Ombudsman office would conduct audits and reviews of state prison facilities, monitor DOC processes, and investigate concerns brought by staff, those incarcerated, and their families. Nineteen states and the Federal Bureau of Prisons currently have corrections oversight established. An Ombudsman office brings transparency and accountability to the corrections system. It's main focus is to make recommendations that promote efficiency, maintain humane treatment practices, and support rehabilitative models of incarceration.

The Ladies of SCI is an advocacy group composed of family members of those incarcerated. Their journey began in the parking lot of Stanley Correctional Facility asking SCI to lift the lockdown, and has expanded to advocate on behalf of affected family members across the state. More information on Ombudsman models can be found at their website: ladies-of-sci.com.

We ask the legislature to:

Create an Ombudsman Office to address the systemic issues within the Wisconsin Department of Corrections.

**Scan me to
learn more**



Community-Based Alternatives to Revocation (ATRr)

Wisconsin's disastrous system of mass supervision is at odds with our widely shared values of justice, human dignity and compassion. Detaining people struggling with poverty, housing insecurity, mental health issues and addiction issues for alleged rule violations is at odds with common sense. Yet, public officials in Wisconsin have been keeping its prisons and jails overcrowded for many years by doubling down on this unjust practice.

Numerous studies demonstrate the deep racial injustice and extent of the harm caused by mass supervision in Wisconsin. Over 25% of people currently incarcerated in Wisconsin prisons are there for a revocation without a new conviction. This practice of conviction-less revocation impacts Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities at highly disproportionate rates.

Governor Evers' budget provides \$8.9 million dollars to expand community-based options for alternatives to revocation. In order to more adequately address the need for community-based alternatives to detaining people for revocations, this amount should be expanded to at least \$15 million dollars. In addition, the community-based alternatives should be in the least restrictive environment needed to help people under supervision succeed and should not involve oppressive practices like GPS or electronic monitoring.

We ask the legislature to:

Add \$15 million to the 2023-25 budget for community-based Alternatives to Revocation



Supporters of Incarcerated People (SIP)

At SIP, we stand in solidarity with the families and loved ones of those who are incarcerated. These families often bear the heavy burden of managing not only their own lives but also the challenges that come with having a loved one in prison.

Many caregivers find themselves responsible for children left behind, facing the emotional and logistical challenges of parenting alone. Additionally, they may struggle to meet their own financial obligations while providing support for their incarcerated family member, such as covering legal expenses or sending money for basic needs.

The emotional toll can be significant, leading to feelings of isolation and stress. Our mission is to offer vital support and resources to these families, helping them navigate their unique challenges. This includes providing access to counseling, legal assistance, and financial aid, as well as fostering community connections to reduce feelings of loneliness.

By empowering families with the resources they need, we aim to create a supportive network that uplifts and strengthens those impacted by incarceration. Together, we can help families thrive despite the hardships they face.

Integrated Voter Engagement (IVE)

Integrated voter engagement is crucial for fostering a healthy democracy and ensuring that all citizens have the opportunity to participate in the electoral process.

1. Increased Voter Turnout

- Awareness Campaigns: Engaging voters through education and outreach can significantly boost participation rates.
- Accessibility: Ensuring information is available in multiple languages and formats helps reach diverse populations.

2. Informed Electorate

- Educational Resources: Providing clear, unbiased information about candidates, issues, and the voting process empowers voters to make informed choices.
- Civic Education: Programs that teach the importance of voting and civic responsibility help cultivate a politically aware citizenry.

3. Strengthening Community Ties

- Local Engagement: Integrated efforts often involve community organizations, fostering connections and encouraging participation at the local level.
- Building Trust: Consistent engagement helps build trust between voters and institutions, making citizens more likely to participate.

4. Diverse Representation

- Inclusivity: Targeting underrepresented groups ensures that various perspectives and needs are addressed in the political arena.
- Equity in Representation: Diverse voter engagement helps to create a more equitable representation in government.

5. Utilizing Technology

- Digital Outreach: Leveraging social media and online platforms can reach younger and tech-savvy populations effectively.
- Data-Driven Strategies: Using analytics to understand voter behavior allows for more tailored engagement efforts.

6. Long-term Engagement

- Ongoing Relationships: Building a culture of civic engagement encourages voters to participate not just in elections but in other community activities.
- Sustained Involvement: Continuous engagement efforts can lead to lifelong voting habits among citizens.

Regional Transportation Authority (RTA)

Transit is an essential service. Transit is not a “choice” for many people; public transit is an essential service. All people—regardless of race, ability, age, income, or identity—have the right to transit mobility and transit accessibility. Public transit infrastructure is vital to the social and economic livelihood of all people. We must protect the right to transit by first ensuring that all individuals have access to convenient, affordable, and equitable transit services. Public transit remains essential to millions of Americans who lack access to other modes of transportation or for whom owning a car doesn’t make financial sense.

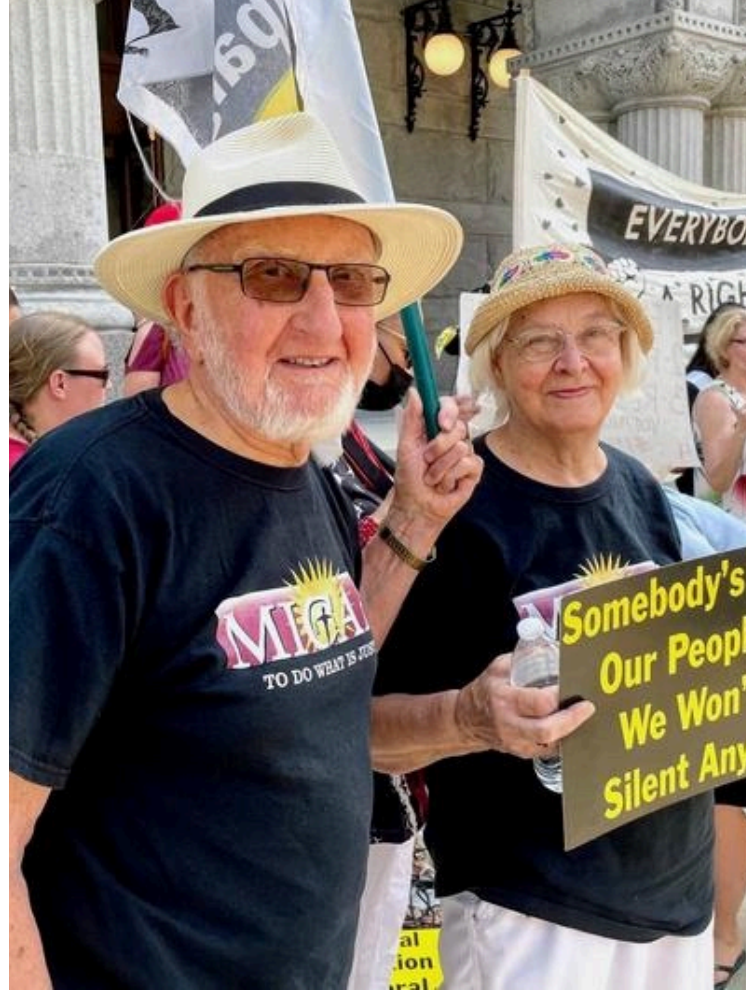
Public Transit provides a critical service needed by many members of our community to be able to fully participate in our civic and economic life. Access to good public transportation is an essential service that provides mobility for individuals who need access to healthcare, employment, government services, grocery stores, retail stores, etc. Lack of essential public transportation places burdens on those who are economically disadvantaged and degrades the overall quality of life and well-being of the community in which people live. Public transit is the only transportation for many low-income families’ access to food, health care, and education.

According to a 2013 study conducted by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve Bank, “inadequate public transit and car affordability emerged as significant barriers to attaining and maintaining employment.” Without reliable transportation, employees may be limited to working certain shifts, may not show up to work on time, or may not be able to show up at all.

In 2017, approximately 5.8 million people living in the United States missed or delayed essential, non-emergency medical care because of transportation barriers, with the chronically ill, women, veterans, the elderly, Black, brown, and indigenous people, and low-income individuals facing the largest transportation burdens.

In order for our Transit system to achieve its essential mission, it needs state funding. We ask that at least 1% of the proposed \$2.6 billion Transportation Budget go towards public transportation options.

Additionally, as Transit is necessary for our region to be able to thrive, it is vital to enable municipalities to have a Regional Transportation Authority (RTA). This would allow communities to be connected and allow for additional funding to meet needs. We ask that in 2025 legislation moves forward to enable communities to create their own RTAs.





Driver's Licenses for All

More than 65,000 workers in our state are immigrants without documentation. State law prohibits them from driving legally. Restoring access to legal driving for all immigrant Wisconsinites will make our roads safer, strengthen our economy, and keep families together.

We invite you to join the WISDOM's Statewide Immigration Task Force in advocating for legislation to restore access to legal driving regardless of immigration status. The right to drive legally in Wisconsin should not depend on one's immigration status.

According to Pew Research Center, about 65,000 undocumented workers contribute to Wisconsin's economy as taxpayers, employees, and consumers. Since 2007, when their ability to drive legally was revoked, these essential workers have faced significant challenges in conducting basic activities like commuting to work, taking children to school, and accessing healthcare.

Restoring access to legal driving would allow undocumented immigrants to complete their driver's examinations and safety screenings and be identified by first responders in the event of an accident. They will be less likely to leave the scene of an accident. They will be far more likely to come forward to work with law enforcement, report accidents, and report crimes. There would be fewer uninsured motorists, resulting in lower premiums for already-insured drivers.

Our Ask

Restore driver's licenses for all immigrant Wisconsinites



Scan me to learn more

Mental Health

There is a lack of support for mental health across Wisconsin. The estimated mental health needs in Wisconsin as last published by WI DHS estimates nearly 25% of adults and over 30% of children have mental illnesses. Wisconsin's suicide rate has been higher than the national average since 2005. Reasons for why someone was not receiving mental health services: 40.8% said cost, 24.6% said "Did not know where to go for services", 15.4% said "insurance won't pay enough for services", and 10% each said stigma or concern for negative job impact. An additional recent concern to note, is that due to a lack of facilities in Wisconsin and Medicaid coverage for treatment, children are often placed in out-of-state facilities away from family.

Everyone regardless of age, income, or other demographic, deserves access to mental health care tailored to their needs. While the solution for supporting people with mental health challenges is a thick-woven blanket, the State is a crucial piece to create success for people and families!

We ask that Wisconsin seriously consider the benefits to accepting Medicaid expansion, as well as adjusting Medicaid coverage to better support people's mental health by: maintaining Medicaid coverage while in jail or prison, and ensuring specific mental health services (as well as long-term treatment) are included in Medicaid.

We request Wisconsin enact legislation to authorize the Department of Health Services to create Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTF) certification. A PRTF is a non-hospital facility offering intensive inpatient services to those under the age of 21, reimbursable by Medicaid.

We ask that Wisconsin transfers nonfederal Medicaid financial responsibility for Community Support Programs (CSP) to the state, and enhance Medicaid reimbursement and staff training for CSP programs. CSPs are multi-disciplinary, wraparound services for persons with serious mental illness. The current county responsibility to pay the nonfederal Medicaid share has resulted in access and quality disparities between counties and six Wisconsin counties do not offer CSP.

We ask that Wisconsin create a billing code to allow reimbursement of Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) services as a direct billable commodity under Medicaid, and increase availability of peer support certification training and employer technical assistance. Complex CCS reporting procedures lead to inconsistencies and delays in CCS reimbursement. Barriers to the CPS workforce development demonstrate a need to increase the availability of peer support certification training and employer technical assistance.

The Health Care Provider Loan Assistance Program (HPLAP) was created to incentivize the practice of high-need health care providers in underserved areas of Wisconsin. The Rural Physician Loan Assistance Program (RPRAP) is a similar program serving rural areas providing grants of \$50,000 to eligible physicians and psychiatrists. **We ask that Wisconsin add behavioral health professionals as eligible providers in both programs in accordance with allowable federal program requirements, increase maximum award amounts to providers to increase the power of the program, and increase program administration funding for the Wisconsin Office of Rural Health.**

Housing

“It is hard to argue that housing is not a fundamental human need. Decent, affordable housing should be a basic right for everybody in this country. The reason is simple: without stable shelter, everything else falls apart.” - Matthew Desmond, Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City

WISDOM and our supporters believe what the Governor believes, “Access to safe and affordable housing is a critical part of our economy and our workforce, and connecting the dots to make sure our kids can bring their best selves to the classroom, families have safety and stability, and that we can recruit and retain talented folks in communities across our state to help address Wisconsin’s generational workforce challenges,” said Gov. Evers.

In 2023, according to the American Community Survey Census Data, approximately 27.6% of Wisconsin households spent more than 30% of their income on rent or mortgage payments and utilities, considered cost-burdened by HUD. The rising cost of housing, including rent and mortgage payments, has led to a significant increase in the number of households struggling to afford housing. The state must develop programs that alleviate the cost burden that many families face in trying to rent or own their own home. Because low and extremely low-income households feel the effects the most, there is increased demand for other government assistance.

We ask the Legislature to prioritize the following initiatives:

- **Increase the current law allowable extension to a tax incremental district's lifespan from one year to three years for the purpose of investments in affordable housing if the district's joint review board approves the additional two-year extension**
- **Create a Zoning Incentive Pilot Program and provide \$20 million GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 to increase affordable housing by incentivizing local units of government, including Tribal nations, to adopt policy initiatives that eliminate zoning barriers to foster affordable housing developments**
- **Redefine “workforce housing” as starting at 60% of the Area Median Income instead of the current 80%. Thirty-one percent of Wisconsin workers earn 60% of the area median income, or \$45,000 per year. Twenty percent earn below \$35,000 per year. Expanding the workforce housing definition to include those earning up to 60% of the county median income addresses the housing affordability crisis for essential workers, ensuring a stable workforce and community stability**
- **Modify the State Housing Tax Credit program to help address the need for affordable housing in the state by:**
 - a. **Increasing the limit on the total amount of state housing tax credits that may be authorized annually by the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority from \$42 million to \$100 million**
 - b. **Modifying current financing requirements for developments to allow the authority to continue to allocate state housing tax credits even if the federal private activity tax-exempt bond volume cap limit is reached**

Childcare

Working families and children must be prioritized when making finance decisions on behalf of our state. Children are our future and do not choose their circumstances, we must support all children, but especially 0-5 ages when brain development is crucial in determining lifelong outcomes. Having young kids is expensive. And one of the biggest hurdles is the rapidly increasing cost of childcare. In Wisconsin, the average price tag for families is [\\$13,572 annually](#).

Childcare is not just a family issue—it's an economic issue. Without reliable care, parents are forced to reduce work hours, leave jobs, or make difficult financial sacrifices. This directly impacts our local workforce and businesses. Investing in sustainable solutions for childcare is essential for our families, economy, and future. Razor-thin margins and the increasing staffing crisis have led to steep declines in available care. Currently, childcare "deserts" exist across more than 50% of the state and 70% of Wisconsin's rural areas, meaning there are more than three children under the age of five for every licensed childcare slot (Center for American Progress, 2020).

State programs in the past that have supported families financially have shown to dramatically improve families ability to be part of our community and care for their children. Particularly programs that have raised wages for early childhood educators and family childcare providers. Without permanent investment Wisconsin's childcare system will suffer more. Without needed state investment, parents, childcare providers, businesses and the Wisconsin economy are paying the price – a combined loss of between \$4.2 and \$6.4 billion (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2021).

We urge you to prioritize policies that support affordable, high-quality childcare for working families. Your leadership can make a real difference in ensuring all children can learn and grow while allowing parents to remain active in the workforce.

Expand the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit and invest \$500 million in childcare so that families, businesses and centers can thrive.

Additionally, we ask that you do NOT seek out cost-saving solutions that jeopardize child safety, such as increasing caregiver to child ratios in centers. Invest in quality solutions not cost-saving solutions – our children deserve this.

Living Wage

Wisconsin works hard. At the end of December of last year there were 3,076,000 people working in the state, a new record. Did you know that the Wisconsin minimum wage is a poverty wage not a living wage? MIT's living wage calculator shows that a living wage for the state of Wisconsin is \$20.96 for one adult and zero children (Economic Policy Institute Family Budget Calculator looks to give similar numbers). According to MIT, the poverty wage for one adult and zero children is \$7.52 per hour. Wisconsin's minimum wage is set at \$7.25 per hour. The state that we love has a below poverty minimum wage. It is a death wage. Wisconsin, in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is "receiving starvation wages." Wisconsin must see the poor. For in the words of King, "All labor has dignity." The truth we tell is that it does not have to be this way. There is enough for all of us.

A budget is a moral document, and speaks to what we tolerate. Poverty is the fourth leading cause of death in the United States, and claimed over 800 people daily in 2019. Poverty is with us due to policy choices. Many families are overwhelmed by rent, childcare, healthcare, utility bills, insurance, food, and other necessities. Wisconsin's seven billionaires have increased their wealth by 28% in 2024, having a combined wealth of \$72.7 billion. At the same time the minimum wage has been frozen since 2009. The minimum wage has risen in Wisconsin's surrounding states of Michigan (\$12.48), Illinois (\$15), and Minnesota (\$11.13). We need and want the dignity of a living wage. It's time we receive dignity.

Wisconsin's minimum wage (for every worker) should be \$20 adjusted automatically with inflation. High Road Strategy Center 2023 October report shared that nearly 900,000 workers (one-third of Wisconsin workforce) would benefit from raising the minimum wage to \$20. Everyone stands to gain. A new study co-authored at UC Berkeley found that when the government raises the minimum wage, small businesses do not cut jobs and may actually benefit from lower costs due to better worker retention. In no city in the state of Wisconsin, should anyone be paying 84% of their annual earnings to afford a one- bedroom rental due to making minimum wage. **We demand a task force be developed to make a clear decision in three months' time from convening on what living wage is appropriate. Again, we think it is \$20 per hour adjusted automatically with inflation.**

Scan me to
learn more



Public School Funding

Gov. Evers' budget proposal – and his declaration of 2025 as the **Year of the Kid** – signals a return to a core Wisconsin value: supporting our children and their public schools, while making critical & popular investments in health care, prison reform, and childcare needs.

Gov. Evers' plan meets critical education needs, restores our special education reimbursement to a sum sufficient 60%, and finally revives what education folks often call the "Tommy Thompson standard" of predictable, inflationary increases to spending limits, so districts can budget responsibly without cutting services, staff, or programs, as they anticipate new costs.

While these investments, on their own, are not enough to close our gaps, they are a huge step forward after 16 years of state budgets that failed to provide an inflationary increase to public school spending. The Governor's proposal should be the floor, not the ceiling, for further discussion.

Enough is enough. The governor has set a clear and fair bar for doing right by our kids in 2025. We urge him to hold that line by refusing to sign another budget into law that forces public school kids to do with less. And we urge all who care about the future of our students and their public schools to join us in demanding a budget that meets their needs.



Language Literacy

Overall reading proficiency is at unacceptably low levels in Wisconsin and the racial disparities in proficiency are marked. In 2023, 72% of white 4th graders in Wisconsin were at or above the basic reading level, compared to 32% of Black youth and 48% of Hispanic youth at that grade level. This is of particular concern to WISDOM because of the association between illiteracy and both juvenile and adult criminal justice system involvement. Literacy is a civil rights issue. 2023 WI Act 20 was designed to address this problem through a return to phonics based education modeled after laws in other states that showed promising results.

The legislation created an Early Literacy Curriculum Council that would recommend acceptable curricula. School districts purchasing these curricula would be eligible for grants for half the cost. The Act also authorized the Department of Public Instruction to contract for 64 Literacy Specialists to support districts in the transition, as well as a Director for a State Office of Early Literacy. Unfortunately none of these funds have been released by the Joint Committee on Finance due to a lawsuit related to the Governor's use of veto language in a subsequent bill implementing the Act. While implementation and funding was envisioned to occur over a five year period, funds need to be included in the budget each biennium for this purpose.

We call on the Legislature to include funds in the 2025-2027 budget to fund the Literacy Specialists, the Director of the State Office of Literacy and curriculum grants.

The Legislature should ensure that any Districts that purchased curriculum in the 2023-2025 biennium that would have been eligible for grants be eligible to receive grants from the 2025-2027 appropriation if they were not able to receive grants in the current biennium.



Rights of Nature

The Rights of Nature movement believes that human beings are meant to live in community with the other living things of this earth. Rather than approach the rest of creation with an attitude of domination, exploitation and ownership, we and all other creatures are happiest when we approach the natural world with respect.

The Rights of Nature movement is heavily influenced by Native American spirituality. Native American people lived on this continent for tens of thousands of years without destroying it. In less than 550 years since the European invasion, we have damaged our environment in ways that have created a true existential crisis. It is time that we all took a moment to consider that our Native American brothers and sisters understood something that the Europeans did not.

The Rights of Nature movement is practical, legal and deeply spiritual. Many have misunderstood the Biblical word that humans were to have “dominion... over all the earth...” to mean unfettered ownership rather than responsibility. Rights of Nature calls us all to re-examine the proper relationship between us and the rest of God’s creation. The Rights of Nature campaign will continue to pursue county and municipal resolutions recognizing the rights of rivers, habitats and species. The campaign will also continue to do outreach and education throughout the state. In the long term, our goal is for the State of Wisconsin to adopt a constitutional amendment recognizing the legal rights of the natural world – including the right to exist, to evolve, and to receive a remedy when damaged.

Please visit the Wisconsin Rights of Nature website at www.rightsofnaturewi.org or scan the QR code below.

**Scan me to
learn more**



Environmental Justice

35 Million tons of plastic waste is generated each and every year in the United States, according to the American Chemistry Council (1)

- 100 Million tons of plastic waste has accumulated in our lakes and rivers (2)
- Global plastic waste is estimated to triple by 2060 (2)
- 90% of plastic produced uses virgin fossil fuel: Market Cost in 2019 \$370 Billion (6)
- 430 million tons of plastic is single-use plastic, like bags and packaging (7)
- Plastic bags used for an average of 12 minutes and become waste that lives forever (5)
- Waste is mismanaged: 2018: Landfills received 27 Million tons of Plastic (18.5% of all MSW landfilled) (1); 2019: 82 Million tons were collected (7)
- 79% of plastic ever made still sits in landfills or our natural environment (3)
- Less than 10% of plastic waste is recycled (2)
- Plastic Bags break down into toxic particles, creating health hazards to humans, wildlife and contaminating food supplies, air, water and soil. (3)(6)
-

Since Wisconsin passed Act 302 in 2015 literally banning bans (4) production and distribution of plastic bags has continued to increase. Just some of the negative impacts in the past 10 years:

- Hazards Multiply
- Landfills Expand
- Cost & Misuse of Precious, Non Renewable Resources

It is time to ACT! Plastic bag bans work! (5) Aldi's, Sam's Club and Costco do not distribute bags and they continue to prosper. The cost to retailers and Wisconsin citizens is too high! **Pass legislation to ban stores from providing free plastic bags to consumers.**

As of 2014, 12 states have effectively reduced waste by passing local ordinances to ban plastic bags. (5) By enacting a ban on plastic bags, Wisconsin could eliminate 1.7 million plastic bags in just one year! (5) Revoke Act 302 and enact legislation to allow stores to only distribute recycled paper bags at the point of sale!

Scan me to
learn more



Lead Poisoning

Three years ago, the Racine Interfaith Coalition (RIC) launched a multi-faceted campaign to educate parents and community members about the hidden dangers of childhood lead poisoning. Even at low levels, lead can cause permanent damage to infants and children, resulting in behavior and learning problems, hyperactivity, and slowed growth.

A major focus of the project is helping parents, physicians and community members understand the importance of testing young children for high blood lead levels. This effort includes distributing to churches, food banks, daycare facilities and other locations a one-page Spanish/English flyer that provides information about the sources of lead, the need for testing, and ways to mitigate risk such as healthier eating. RIC has also created a presentation that has been given to churches and community groups and volunteers attend community events to pass out information and talk with parents. In September and October 2024, RIC trained eight Lead-free Youth Ambassadors who, for the next four weeks, knocked on nearly 1000 doors and talked to nearly 200 families about the importance of having their children tested. Based on that work, the City of Racine asked RIC's Lead Free Youth Ambassadors to canvass targeted neighborhoods to inform residents about the free program to replace their lead water service lines in 2025. The first phase of that canvassing took place for six weeks from January through March.

RIC has been helped significantly in its efforts to implement its Lead-Free Racine project by the Coalition on Lead Emergency (C.O.L.E.), a collective of several groups, including MICAH, that, for many years, has been doing outstanding educational and advocacy work in Milwaukee. RIC became an affiliate of C.O.L.E. in 2022.

**Scan me to
learn more**



Medicaid

The Governor's only strong constitutional power in the budget process is his veto power, which he can use to leverage compromise with the State Legislative majority. In the event of a budget impasse, there will be a tight public focus on the popular issues the Governor is insisting upon.

We are asking every legislator to urge the Governor not to sign any budget that does not include the following:



Badgercare Expansion

Wisconsin is one of only 10 states which has failed to expand its state Medicaid program, denying affordable health care to roughly 90,000 Wisconsinites.



Sufficient Education

The Legislature has been short changing our public schools for years. We need a budget that fairly funds special education and increases per-pupil spending to make up for years of inflation.



Corrections Reform

Our corrections system is broken. At minimum the next budget should substantially increase funding for alternatives to incarceration, and should not build any new prisons.



Expanding Affordable Health Care: A Solution to the Crisis of High Costs and Limited Access

Big hospitals and big insurance companies have made access to health care a privilege reserved for those who can afford it. High premiums, deductibles, and rampant claims denials and surprise medical bills have made health care increasingly unaffordable, even for those with insurance. The popular bill that drew 43 co-sponsors in the last session dramatically expands BadgerCare which has much lower premiums, cost sharing, and few claims denials. Individuals without insurance and small businesses who cannot afford good insurance can buy-in. It also doubles the income cap on eligibility for public coverage.

Celebrating 25 Years of WISDOM: Empowering Through Unity

[Purchase a Ticket](#)

bit.ly/wisdom25th



Date: August 7, 2025

Time: VIP Reception from 5:30-6:30 PM | Event from 6:30-9:00 PM

Location: Pfister Hotel, 424 E. Wisconsin Ave. Milwaukee, WI

Join us as we mark a milestone of impact, resilience, and progress! For the past 25 years, WISDOM has stood at the forefront of the fight for social justice, advocating for equity, dignity, and opportunity for all in Wisconsin.

Get your early bird \$75 a ticket by: June 7, 2025 or a **table of 10 for \$675!** After June 7 the tickets go up to \$100 per ticket! Purchase a ticket by scanning the QR code above.

[Become a Sponsor](#)

bit.ly/sponsorwisdom25th



As a valued leader in our community, we invite you to join us as a sponsor for this special occasion. Your sponsorship will not only help us commemorate this milestone but also continue our mission of advocating for equity, dignity, and opportunity for all in Wisconsin.

We offer various sponsorship levels to fit your organization's goals, from **Supporter (\$500)** to **Visionary Sponsor (\$20,000)**. You can view all sponsorship benefits and secure your spot by going to link above or scanning the QR code.

[Questions](#)

For any questions, contact us at yperkins@wisdomwisconsin.org or call (414) 309-4851.

Contact Information

Phone
(414) 831-2070

Website
www.wisdomwisconsin.org

Email
office@wisdomwisconsin.org

Social Media
[@wisdomwisconsin.org](https://www.instagram.com/wisdomwisconsin.org)

Office Hours

Mon-Fri 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Sat & Sun Closed

Address
**2821 N. Vel Phillips,
Ste 115
Milwaukee, WI 53212**