

GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE

April 8, 2022

To the Honorable Members of the Assembly:

I am vetoing **Assembly Bill 828** in its entirety.

The bill requires the Governor to allocate sufficient funds received under section 602 of the federal Social Security Act, as amended by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021, to the Department of Corrections and the Department of Health Services for additional compensation for correctional officers, youth counselors, and psychiatric care technicians. The bill requires the Department of Corrections to provide an additional \$2 per hour to correctional officers and youth counselors during calendar year 2022 and \$5 per hour during calendar year 2023. The bill also requires the Department of Health Services to provide an additional \$2 per hour to psychiatric care technicians during calendar year 2022 and \$5 per hour during calendar year 2023. The hourly wage increases would not be cumulative. Under the bill, the pay increases are not permanent and would be rescinded when ARPA funding is no longer available. The bill also requires the Governor to allocate these ARPA funds to both agencies that may then use them to provide recruitment and retention benefits, including, but not limited to, overtime compensation, sign-on bonuses, and longevity bonuses, to employees in these classifications.

I am vetoing the bill because I object to mandating the use of additional one-time federal funds without taking into account the other needed investments of federal dollars, most importantly our ongoing work to respond to and recover from the pandemic. My administration has already prioritized funds to provide a much-deserved add-on to our correctional workers while ensuring sufficient funding for our ongoing efforts. While this add-on is funded through a combination of federal funds under ARPA and existing agency budgets during the current fiscal biennium, it is the intent of the administration to make these pay increases permanent with readily available state resources, beginning in the 2023-25 biennial budget. The majority of these funds have already been allocated to assist Wisconsinites with the recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic. This bill would require that federal funds be redirected from the public health response, broadband, or tourism grants.

Furthermore, the 2021-23 compensation plan and companion bill proposed by the Division of Personnel Management within the Department of Administration provided additional state funding for compensation for correctional officers, youth counselors, and psychiatric care technicians which are critical for

employee recruitment and retention, as well as to ensure safety inside of our institutions. This proposal from my administration funded these pay increases on a permanent basis using a small portion of the largest general fund balance in the history of our state. Unfortunately, the Joint Committee on Employment Relations chose to play politics, reject this proposal, and instead authorized a smaller and unfunded pay increase that is insufficient in solving this workforce crisis.

In favoring one-time ARPA funds instead of state funds, the Legislature is not offering a meaningful solution to this ongoing problem. Rescinding the increases after certain ARPA funds are no longer available will create even more significant recruitment and retention issues. Responsibly compensating our correctional officers, youth counselors, and psychiatric technicians is an important and ongoing state cost. The state holds the largest general fund balance in the history of the state and our budget stabilization fund is at its highest level *ever*. We have ample state resources available to make these important investments, and I welcome the Legislature to join me by supporting this effort in my next biennial budget.

Respectfully submitted,
TONY EVERS
Governor