

## AFSCME Corrections Officers Make Transformational Impact

In early February, AFSCME Council 5 Correctional Officers went to the capitol in full force to fight for legislative reforms and investments that improve the lives of CO's across Minnesota. Officers fought for legislative priorities such as Safe Staffing to ensure we hire more CO's and retain current officers in order to reduce staff assaults and increase facility safety. Officers also successfully testified and passed a ban on private prisons into law and showed their strength and solidarity in countless meetings with lawmakers to hold them accountable to our shared values.



Correctional Officer Matt Krengel, Local 599 president from MCF- St. Cloud [testified to the MN House Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee](#) in support of legislation to ban private prisons in Minnesota. After fighting for this bill for decades, it was signed into law by Governor Tim Walz. Several of our currently-serving Correctional Officers have countless horror stories from the times they worked in the former private prison located in Appleton, MN operated a large national private prison company, now called CoreCivic.

Correctional Officers from every facility and local union packed the committee room and were successful in passing this legislation unanimously out of committee, passed the House and Senate, and was signed into law!

For well more than a decade, our AFSCME Council 5 Correctional Officers have led the fight to ban private prisons in our state. Simply put, private prison corporations put their profit margin over staff safety. These corporations have historically ignored staff when they raise security and safety concerns, failed to deliver any programming to offenders because it cuts down not only on the company's profit margin, but effective and safe programming reduces recidivism. These corporations HATE successful reductions in prison re-entry because they see offenders as their income stream.

Meanwhile, our Correctional Officers **ALWAYS** put public safety and facility safety and security first, above all else. Period.



One Strong, United Voice for Minnesota Workers

## Getting Ready to Fight

During the legislative session, nearly 80 Correctional Officers from across our state met at the AFSCME Council 5 office in South St. Paul to hear a legislative briefing from **AFSCME Council 5 Legislative Director Ethan Vogel** and ask questions pertaining to their legislative priorities and help train new attendees how to talk to legislators, etc. to best get them on the record in support of our values and priorities.

**AFSCME Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl** spoke to the crowded room of Correctional Officers, saying in part, "Our union is honored to work alongside you in fighting for what YOU need and what YOU deserve. You protect your fellow brothers and sisters inside the walls of your facilities, you protect other staff and offenders, and you protect public safety for every single Minnesotan."

She continued, "The work you are doing here today is critical. All of you know that the lawmakers in St. Paul control your budget, your staffing levels, and so much more. But your powerful show of force to hold them accountable is truly remarkable."



Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl speaks to Correctional Officers at the 2023 AFSCME CPC Lobby Day.

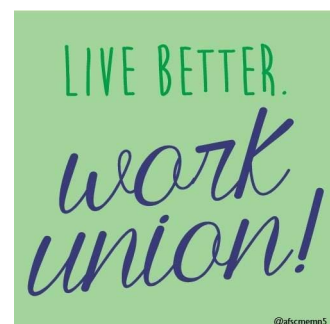


## Body Camera Legislation -Our Response

Legislation to require officers to wear body cameras was introduced in the Legislature. As a result, AFSCME Correctional Officers debated the bill and its potential implications.

After serious consideration, the AFSCME Corrections Policy Committee (CPC) decided to oppose this proposal and make it clear this is not a funding priority. Our position was if the Legislature decided to fund body cameras, significant guardrails must be included. We will continue to advocate that the application of body-worn cameras be limited to circumstances such as cell extractions, inmate transports, and hospital coverage where existing, fixed-position camera coverage does not exist.

AFSCME Correctional Officers have fought for many years to ensure the Department of Corrections pushes investments in our existing cameras within our facilities. Our members believe to our core that fixed cameras throughout our facilities ensures staff and inmate safety alike. However, we will continue to demand these investments and limited uses of body cameras only because they should not replace fixed cameras only because they should not replace fixed cameras throughout our facilities.



## Holding Elected Officials Accountable and Meeting Legislative Allies/Leaders

AFSCME Correctional Officers met with countless legislators from all political parties and House and Senate leadership to hold them accountable to our shared values and the legislative priorities of our corrections members!



Above: COs gather in committee room to hear their bill to ban private prisons



Above: Members meet with House Majority Leader Jamie Long (DFL)



Above: Correctional Officers meet with House Public Safety Committee Chair and fellow AFSCME Council 5, Local 2938 union member State Representative Kelly Moller (DFL)



Above: Members meet with State Rep. Jeff Witte (R)



Above: COs meet with State Senator Michael Kreun (R)

On right: Members gather outside of committee room in the State Office Building prior to their bill hearing.

