

Resolution to Oppose All For-Profit Prisons and Detention Centers

Whereas for-profit prisons housed 115,954 inmates in 2019, a number that has increased by 33% since 2000 in private for-profit prisons while the overall prison population only increased 3% over that same time-span¹;

Whereas 40,634 immigrants were held in detention centers in 2019, 81% were detained in privately run for-profit facilities, marking a 739% increase of immigrant peoples privately detained from 2002 to 2019¹, and as of 2016 55% of the 206 immigrant detention centers in the US are privately run²;

Whereas privately run prisons have been found to maximize profits by minimizing care for inmates by means of reduced “provision of food, health care, and rehabilitative services” while having increased amounts of abuse and confinement in unsanitary conditions; ³

Whereas the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma houses as many as 1,575 undocumented immigrants facing deportation and there are numerous allegations of abuse of people detained, such as the overuse of solitary confinement that has averaged 70 days per stay which is 29% longer than other facilities, and many of the stays in solitary were retaliatory for hunger strikes when detainees were protesting unfair treatment⁴;

Whereas a lawsuit against the Northwest Detention Center alleges it has violated minimum wages laws in Washington State by understaffing the center and instead employing detainees for less than \$1.00 per day while receiving \$57,000,000 in revenue per year⁵;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Thurston County Democrats opposes any and all for-profit, privately run prisons or detention centers from operating in our state and fully supports the passage of HB 1090-2021-22 “Concerning private, for-profit detention facilities” which seeks to make such facilities illegal in the state of Washington³.

¹The Sentencing Project (2021) Private prisons in the United States. Retrieved on March 11, 2021 from <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/private-prisons-united-states/>

²The Conversation (2019). Why are private prisons controversial? 3 questions answered. Retrieved on March, 11, 2021 from <https://theconversation.com/why-are-private-prisons-controversial-3-questions-answered-116774>

³Washington State Legislature (2021). Engrossed House Bill 1090. Retrieved on March 11, 2021 from <http://lawfilesexxt.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/House%20Bills/1090.E.pdf?q=20210311203237>

⁴The Seattle Times (2020). ‘Secret prison within a prison’: reports details solitary confinement practices at Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma. Retrieved on March 11, 2021 from <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/secret-prison-within-a-prison-report-details-solitary-confinement-practices-at-northwest-detention-center-in-tacoma/>

⁵Megan Ybarra (n.d.) Abolition geographies. Retrieved on March 11, 2021 from <http://www.meganybarra.net/abolition-geographies1.html>