

American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin Supports AB-741

Good Morning, Chair Kaufert, Vice-Chair O'Connor, and Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Corrections.

My name is Jonathan McCray Jones, and I'm here on behalf of the ACLU of Wisconsin to speak in support of Assembly Bill 741, expanding access to basic hygiene products and setting fair pricing standards in Wisconsin correctional facilities.

At the core of this bill is a simple truth: people who are incarcerated are still people. They do not lose their humanity when they enter a jail or prison, and how we treat them while they are inside directly shapes what kind of neighbors, workers, and community members they will be when they return home.

Basic hygiene is not a privilege or a reward. It is a fundamental part of being human. Right now, many incarcerated people are forced to pay inflated commissary prices for soap, deodorant, toothpaste, and shampoo while earning just pennies an hour. That reality does not teach responsibility or accountability. It teaches degradation, dependence, and despair.

When people are denied the ability to care for their bodies, the consequences ripple outward. Poor hygiene leads to health problems, unsafe living conditions, and tension inside facilities. It also undermines rehabilitation. If we want people to leave prison prepared for life on the outside, we should not strip them of the most basic habits of self care while they are inside.

This bill also recognizes that people have different needs, including culturally appropriate hair and skin care products. That is not special treatment. It is a recognition of reality. Treating people with dignity inside helps them maintain dignity outside.

This is a win for everyone. It improves health and safety inside facilities, reduces long term costs, and better prepares people for reentry. Respecting human dignity is not soft on crime. It is smart, practical, and rooted in the belief that every life has value.

We urge you to support this bill.