



MANDELA BARNES

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
11th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

February 22, 2016

The Honorable Brad Schimel
Attorney General
Wisconsin Department of Justice

Dear Attorney General Schimel,

Today, I write to urge you to open an investigation into Governor Walker's prolonged cover-up of documented abuses, alleged criminal activity, and systemic mismanagement at the state-operated Lincoln Hills School for Boys and Copper Lake School for Girls facility (Lincoln Hills).

Serious allegations of cruel, unjust, and potentially criminal behavior at Lincoln Hills have been under investigation since December of 2015. As I, and the rest of Wisconsin, anxiously await a full and in-depth report from the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, I have additional concerns about the lack of action taken during the past several years.

In the past few months investigative reporting, interviews with public officials, and previously withheld documents have made abundantly clear that Governor Walker's administration and the Department of Corrections have been aware of the alleged abuses at Lincoln Hills for the past four years. Not only did they fail to act to investigate the issue, they hid extremely pertinent evidence from the public when faced with requests from the Wisconsin State Journal under the State Public Records Law seeking any information the Governor's office received about potential abuse or misconduct at Lincoln Hills.

Specifically, a letter dated February, 2012 from Racine County Circuit Court Judge Richard Kreul, detailing a particularly violent youth on youth assault and the poor response by Lincoln Hills staff, was not released as part of the open records request. A spokeswoman for the Governor excused this decision because it related to an isolated incident, and therefore did not relate to reports of abuses and misconduct at the facility. I do not accept this reasoning, and I am concerned that this behavior suggests the administration is withholding additional critical information.

As the Attorney General, you claim to work to combat crimes against children, provide closure and justice for victims of sexual assault, and preserve Wisconsin's proud tradition of open government. I ask you to uphold those values and your responsibility to enforce laws written to protect Wisconsin's children and families and investigate the cover up by Governor Walker's administration of their knowledge of the alleged abuses at Lincoln Hills.

The lack of action by Governor Walker has caused irreparable harm to youth and families. Those children and their families deserve answers as to why, for four years, their governor did absolutely nothing to protect them while they were under the state's care.

As a legislator who represents these children and their families, I request that you, in your capacity as Attorney General, investigate the decisions and actions that have jeopardized the safety and security of those at the facility.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mandela Barnes', with a stylized, flowing script.

Mandela Barnes
Wisconsin State Representative
11th Assembly District