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WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 15, 2025

Criminal Justice Transparency Bill Clears Senate in Bipartisan Vote

MADISON, WI — Today the Wisconsin State Senate approved Assembly Bill 75 (Senate Bill 115), legislation that brings additional transparency to the state's criminal justice system by requiring the Department of Justice to collect and publicly report detailed information about how criminal cases are handled.

This bill empowers citizens, lawmakers, and public safety officials with a clearer understanding of decisions made at various points in the criminal justice process, including who is making those decisions and how outcomes vary across jurisdictions.

"The judicial system can be confusing and opaque for many citizens, which is frustrating for those who want to know why the system sometimes is too lenient and who is responsible for those decisions," said bill co-author **Sen. Rob Hutton** (R-Brookfield). "This bill gives the public access to important information in a searchable format. The enhanced transparency will add accountability throughout the process."

Under the amended bill, DOJ will be required to publish an annual report and maintain a searchable online database of key criminal case data. The information will include the county in which the case was filed and the prosecutor assigned to the case; the name of the court official assigned to the case; the charging recommendation from the referring law enforcement agency; criminal charges filed; whether any charges were dismissed; and whether the case resulted in conviction.

The bill will preserve data for 10 years, giving the public and policymakers the ability to analyze trends in charging decisions, plea deals, and convictions. This is essential to maintaining public trust in Wisconsin's judicial process, deterring unwarranted leniency for repeat offenders, and slowing down the revolving door of crime.

"Wisconsinites deserve to know how justice is being administered and, in some cases, who is responsible for decisions that empower repeat offenders. This bill ultimately empowers citizens to better understand this critical function of government," **Hutton said.**

Assembly Bill 75, as amended, passed the Senate unanimously and now heads back to the Assembly for final passage.

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