

Dear Governor:

We the undersigned faith organizations represent different traditions from across the religious and political spectrum. Our organizations advocate for a criminal justice system that brings healing for victims of crime, restoration for those who commit crimes, and to maintain public safety.

We write in reference to a letter you recently received from Harley Lappin, Chief Corrections Officer at Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), announcing the Corrections Investment Initiative – the corporation’s plan to spend up to \$250 million buying prisons from state, local, and federal government entities, and then managing the facilities. The letter from Mr. Lappin states that CCA is only interested in buying prisons if the state selling the prison agrees to pay CCA to operate the prison for 20 years – at minimum. Mr. Lappin further notes that any prison to be sold must have at least 1,000 beds, and that the state must agree to keep the prison at least 90% full during the length of the contract.

The undersigned faith organizations urge you to decline this dangerous and costly invitation.

CCA’s initiative would be costly to taxpayers in your state. CCA would be buying not only a physical structure but a guarantee that your state will fill a large prison and continuously pay the corporation taxpayer money to operate the institution for at least two decades. Your state will incur long-term costs associated with increasing incarceration rates, while CCA’s profits will only continue to increase as well.

CCA’s initiative would be costly to the moral strength of your state. The requirement to ensure that the prison remains 90% full for at least two decades would pose a tremendous obstacle to more cost-effective criminal justice policies. The United States imprisons far more people than any other nation in the world. The millions of people who are directly impacted by this explosive rate of incarceration included families and communities of the incarcerated. Families and communities can be strengthened through evidence-based alternatives to incarceration and reentry policies that quicken the reintegration of those coming out of prison into their home communities.

The current incarceration rate has been spurred over the last four decades by criminal laws that impose steep sentences. Mass incarceration deprives record numbers of individuals of their liberty, disproportionately affects people of color, and has not had the impact on public safety that equals the financial and moral costs that are being paid. In addition, the crippling cost of imprisoning increasing numbers of people burdens government budgets with rising debt and only exacerbates the current fiscal crisis confronting states across the nation.

Despite the increasing costs to states and the nation as a whole that results from mass incarceration, CCA continues to reap enormous profits. We believe the profits CCA receives are not worth the costs paid by the states and by the people who will be incarcerated and their families who will be impacted by the requirement to keep prisons filled rather than the greater need for the criminal justice system to truly be just and fair.

We urge you to reject the initiative sent to you from CCA. Criminal justice policies do not need to rely on the privatization of correctional services, but rather, should be evidence-based policies and practices that are proven to reduce recidivism and can lead to a reduction in the prison population. Mr. Lappin's proposal is an invitation to deepening state debt, increased costs to people of color who are disproportionately impacted by mass incarceration as well as their families and communities, and decreased public safety.

Sincerely,

African American Ministers in Action  
African American Ministers Leadership Council  
African Methodist Episcopal Church – Social Action Commission  
American Baptist Home Mission Societies  
American Friends Service Committee  
Church of the Brethren  
Disciples Home Missions-Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada  
Disciples Justice Action Network  
Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, NY  
Franciscan Action Network  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Healing Communities  
Holy Family Institute  
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, USA – JPIC  
Irish Apostolate USA  
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers  
Mennonite Central Committee, U.S. Washington Office  
Muslim Public Affairs Council  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order, OSF  
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby  
Office of Peace and Justice, Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters  
PICO National Network  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of Public Witness  
Social Justice Committee, Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, KS  
Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
Sisters of St. Dominic of Caldwell, NJ  
The Episcopal Church  
Tri-State Coalition for Responsible Investment  
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations  
United Church of Christ/Justice and Witness Ministries  
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society