# Legislation Text

**File #:** 24960, **Version:** 1

Title
REPORT OF EOC - Statement in Opposition to the Passage of SB 207
Body
To Mayor Soglin and the Common Council:

While we recognize that the current Legislative session has ended without the passage of Senate Bill 207, we would be remiss in neglecting the opportunity to state our opposition to the language of this bill. This bill is a threat to the fabric of fair employment which guarantees all citizens of Wisconsin an equal opportunity to compete in the job market. It will create a disparate impact on communities of color given the current racial disparities in the State of Wisconsin criminal justice system, especially the disproportionate representation of Black and Latino males in that system.

It is our collective opinion that the passage of Senate Bill 207 or any similar bill will take away the power of Cities and Municipalities to impose laws to govern their communities and preserve the well being and general safety of all its citizens. It will eliminate the City of Madison's ability to pen and enforce legislation to protect its citizens from discrimination. The language of Senate Bill 207 would overturn a City of Madison Ordinance protection in place for thirty-four years as it pertains to arrest record and conviction record. It would remove the substantially related clause, time limits, and consideration for differentiation of degree of a felony (i.e. murder versus forgery) that are currently provisions of Madison General Ordinances.

Dane County has the lowest recidivism rates in the state and we believe that the protection afforded individuals by City of Madison has contributed to that reduction. Statistics show that access to housing and employment reduces recidivism. We believe that when individuals with arrest and conviction records are given an equal opportunity through state and local laws their ability to remain in the community is increased. The recent economic conditions have impacted communities throughout the state and the nation. We believe that the protections regarding arrest record and conviction record are factors in the City of Madison's ability to historically achieve and currently maintain lower unemployment rates. Along with the community impact, possible financial burdens on employers have the opportunity to increase. Instead of defending small complaints dealing with individual disparate treatment cases, this legislation opens the door for Federal disparate impact cases, which are much more costly and time consuming to defend.

In closing, we ask that you consider sending an official message to the Wisconsin Legislature that communicates how enacting this or any similar law will remove the protection for a significant group of men and women in communities around the state of Wisconsin by limiting the protections that cities and municipalities can provide to and for its citizens.

Sincerely,

The Equal Opportunities Commission
The Equal Opportunities Commission Employment Subcommittee