

## To the Alabama State Legislators:

We are a coalition of 275 Alabama students from 28 colleges, universities, and law schools writing to you in opposition to Governor Kay Ivey's attempt to spend \$2.6 billion on three new mega-prisons without a shred of transparency. **We are Alabama Students Against Prisons, and our futures depend on your immediate action.**

It is no secret that, barring significant action, our prisons will remain unconstitutional—ensuring a federal takeover by the Department of Justice. It is equally clear that our prisons are in need of long-overdue maintenance. But Governor Ivey and Commissioner Dunn have elected to pursue a multi-facility mega-prison construction project that will address only a small aspect of the overall failings of the Department of Corrections. **Throughout the entire process, they have acted behind closed doors, keeping the public and even you—our elected leaders—entirely in the dark.**

The DOJ report on Alabama prisons details 5 pages of actions Alabama could take to become compliant with the 8th Amendment prohibition on “cruel and unusual punishment.” Not a single recommendation mentions new construction. Though part of the DOJ lawsuit does highlight infrastructural deficiencies, these primarily could be addressed by installing more cameras and repairing broken locks. **If a cost estimate for implementing these minimum infrastructural repairs has been done, the people of Alabama deserve to know about it.** The quality of our current facilities, however abysmal, is a minor concern in comparison to the core reasons our prisons are unconstitutional—violence stemming from a dysfunctional Department of Corrections, chronic understaffing, and poor leadership.

Even if building modern facilities addresses some concerns, it is unlikely to take us out of the DOJ's crosshairs. The best use of taxpayer dollars cannot be to pursue the action **most expensive** and **least likely** to avoid federal intervention—paying nearly \$3 billion to rent 3 prisons. Why have there been no known attempts to determine the cost of pursuing the DOJ's actual recommendations?

While we understand the need for action and the difficulty of legislating around prison issues, **we do not accept the degree of secrecy under which this plan has developed.** Governor Ivey has attempted to act unilaterally and has refused to answer the legitimate questions of her constituents. It is past time for our legislators to intervene.

We must demand more information through an independent and transparent assessment of the Alabama Department of Corrections before Alabama is strapped into this expensive, irreversible plan. **Without an audit, we risk torching a significant portion of our already strapped discretionary spending.**

If Alabama moves forward with this prison construction plan, our generation will be paying for it until we retire—and we won't even own anything in the end. **We implore you: do everything in**

**your power to delay these contracts from being signed.** You are the last line of defense against this antidemocratic process appalling executive overreach.

Sincerely yours,  
Alabama Students Against Prisons