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practices.

The pressure being applied to City Council by the local coalition is part of a national movement pushing governmental bodies to divest from private-prison profiteers.

In California, student members of Afrikan Black Coalition succeeded in pressuring the University of California system into selling its \$30 million worth of holdings in private prison companies in 2015.

Berkeley City Council followed suit, becoming the first city to adopt a resolution to divest from private prisons in July; however, actual divestment is pending a financial impact analysis.

In spring, the Oregon Education Association, which represents 45,000 public education employees across the state, passed a resolution to lobby the Oregon Investment Council and state treasurer to divest the Public Employee Retirement System from stocks related to private prisons, including investors.

It's also asking Portland City Council to divest, stating that its 4,000 members in Portland would like to see the council approve all of the committee's recommendations.

"As educators, we see the impacts that the prison and detention system has on our youth and families," OEA told council in a public comment it submitted. "We believe that for-profit prison corporations and the financial institutions that back them are some of the most disturbing drivers of mass incarceration."

Private-prison stock fell following the Department of Justice's announcement earlier this year that it was scaling back its contracts with private prison companies.

But prison-industry giants CoreCivic (formerly Corrections Corporation of America) and GEO Group saw their stock shoot up drastically after Donald Trump's victory was announced on Election Day. Trump supports prison privatization, and he's campaigned on deporting more immigrants, who are typically held for long periods of time in privately run immigrant detention centers.

He told MSNBC earlier this year: "I do think we can do a lot of privatizations and private prisons. ... It seems to work better."

Evidence, however, shows the opposite, with multiple studies indicating private prisons' cost-cutting measures lead to violence and overcrowding, and create barriers to visitation. These factors all lead to higher rates of recidivism among inmates who've been housed in private prisons.

The Portland Prison Divestment Coalition sent a letter to members of City Council on Oct. 31, urging them to use their votes to "add heat to what is becoming unstoppable momentum to end the prison industry, and mass incarceration."

But a Trump presidency will likely slow, if

not reverse, that momentum.

"With the outcome of the Tuesday election, it's even more urgent that our local leaders step up on behalf the communities of color and immigrant communities that Trump seeks to throw away," said Amanda Aguilar Shank, deputy director of Enlace, which plays a lead role in the coalition. "The strategy of prison divestment has always been about a strategy to economically weaken the prison industry, and Portland is still perfectly positioned to be a national leader in doing so."

Enlace also convened the national Prison Divestment Campaign that launched in 2011.

Sankofa Collective Northwest co-director Leila Haile submitted written testimony, telling City Council that Sankofa recently turned down a \$2,000 grant from Wells Fargo for Portland Black Pride.

"If we can make a stand for our values, and cut our ties with Wells Fargo, we think that the City can as well," Haile wrote.

Ashlee Albies, on behalf of the National Lawyer Guild's Portland chapter, also submitted written comment. She stated, "Although there are no private prisons in the state of Oregon, we feel the impacts of draconian immigration policies lobbied for by and profiting the private prison industry."

But not having private prisons within its borders doesn't mean Oregon isn't sending people to them.

In 2015, nearly 1,000 people were transferred from Portland District Office Holding Facility to immigrant detention centers, according to a data research group at Syracuse University known as TRAC.

Most were sent to GEO Group's Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Wash., one of the largest immigration prisons in the country.

One man who'd spent time at the facility also submitted testimony to City Council, claiming he was subjected to physical and verbal abuse and long stints in solitary confinement while he was there. He described the rooms as being overcrowded with people sleeping on the floors, and he said the food lacked basic nutritional value.

His complaints are consistent with the groundbreaking report from Mother Jones earlier this year. The magazine sent reporter Shane Bauer to work undercover as a guard in a private prison owned by CoreCivic for four months, giving the world a rare look inside.

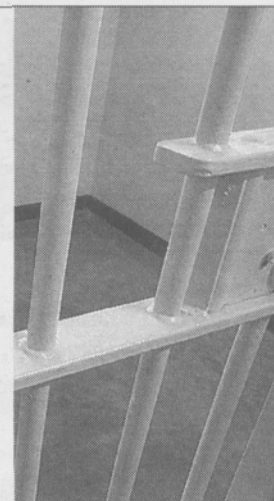
Bauer revealed the company's cost-cutting measures were resulting in human rights abuses. He witnessed how understaffing and high staff turnover were fostering a very dangerous and violent environment within the prison's walls, and he reported that inmates were living in squalor and frequently denied medical treatment, even for serious illness.

The Socially Responsible Investments Committee considered, but did not recommend, divesting from U.S. Bancorp, which also plays a significant role in

**FURTHER READING**

**COMMENTARY:** Show City Council your support for cutting Portland's ties to the prison industry.  
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**ONLINE:** The multibillion-dollar immigrant detention industry costs taxpayers but does little to stifle improper border crossings.  
[news.streetroots.org/immigrantdetention](http://news.streetroots.org/immigrantdetention)



financing private prisons.

According to notes from the committee's April meeting, it was decided that while U.S. Bancorp has "some controversial issues ... the bank has far fewer controversial governance issues than its peers" and has taken some positive steps.

A report released Nov. 17 by a Washington D.C.-based research center, In the Public Interest, found U.S. Bancorp was one of the six banks primarily responsible for bankrolling private prisons.

The city has holdings worth \$45.1 million in U.S. Bancorp subsidiary U.S. Bank.

The report, "The Banks That Finance Private Prison Companies," detailed how six financial institutions are propping up the private prison industry by extending revolving credit, providing astronomical loans and underwriting bonds for CoreCivic and GEO Group.

Because the private prison companies rely on revolving credit and massive debt, these banks are instrumental in their operations. The report indicated that at the end of June 2016, CoreCivic was \$1.5 billion in debt and GEO Group was \$1.9 billion in debt.

But big banks continue to lend CoreCivic and GEO Group more money – money that's allowing them to expand their reach into other sectors of the criminal justice system.

On Oct. 28, Damon Hininger, Corrections Corporation of America president and CEO, announced, "Rebranding as CoreCivic is the culmination of a multi-year strategy to transform our business from largely corrections and detention services to a wider range of government solutions."

This expansion included converting to a Real Estate Investment Trust, and therefore being able to rake in millions in tax-free revenue, and investing \$250 million to acquire and build a network of residential re-entry and community corrections facilities.

"By providing loans to (CoreCivic) and GEO Group to purchase companies that provide residential re-entry and electronic monitoring services, the banks have helped position the private prison companies to receive new business as states and the federal government replace 'tough on crime' with 'community corrections' policies and replace immigration detention policies with immigration surveillance policies," argued the report on banks behind the prison industry.

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