When we hear the phrase private schools we often think of a “better education” for our children.

But what exactly comes to mind when we hear private prisons? Do we think better incarceration for those who are locked down? I’m asking because this topic is hot and currently on the table. One reputable company, Correction Corporation America –CCA (NYSE: CXW) is very interested in making private prison ownership a reality across the entire United States.

They offered to save each of our debt-ridden states, Minnesota included, by buying out the state prisons for millions of dollars above whatever debt is owed (close to $50 million here), which would put our state (and the other 48 states – Ohio already closed the deal in 2011 at $72 million) in a good position financially. Bye, bye state shutdowns, hello jobs, perhaps? Before getting too excited about this seemingly great opportunity for the financial situation here, I must warn there is some small print to consider in this contract.

Our beloved state government would have to agree to keep the prisons at least 90 percent full at all times during the proposed 20-year contract. That means that everybody is at risk for incarceration. Things could get real ugly around town with the state trying to stay in compliance with this big money contract. CCA, which was started in 1983 by three businessmen in Tennessee, is an extremely wealthy company and it intends to stay that way. With its support, stricter criminal laws are being passed by legislation, increased arrests, convictions and sentencing can occur, and then there is our own additional participation in CCA’s increased wealth. We as African-Americans provide a steady influx of young and old men and women daily, who are out of work, out of school and low on hope.

With this mixture, the state will not have a problem keeping the quota filled for a long time to come. Contact your state representative today and find out if he or she supports the bid that CCA has put in. Then ask yourself, do you?

Sharon Brooks is founder of Peace of Hope
peaceofhope@excite.com