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After a furious backlash, TSU president backs off CoreCivic board post paying more than \$200K

Tennessee State University President Glenda Glover quickly reversed her decision to join the corporate board of private prison giant CoreCivic after a furious backlash from the community. Glover announced her decision Friday morning, hours after news broke that she was planning to join the board in March. But after "listening to voices that I trust," Glover said, she decided not to do so. Community leaders immediately denounced Glover's addition to the CoreCivic board, saying she was joining the leadership of a company that profited off of mass incarceration. City leaders severed ties with CoreCivic last year, and President Joe Biden's administration is phasing out private prisons in the name of racial justice.

Tennessee State University President Glenda Glover holds a check donation for their "\$1 Million in 1 Month" campaign at TSU Thursday, Jan. 30, 2020, in Nashville, Tenn. Glover's position as leader of the biggest historically Black university in the state intensified the fallout. Growing incarceration numbers disproportionately affect the Black community. In the news release announcing her addition to the CoreCivic board, Glover said she wanted to help incarcerated African Americans and be "an inside voice that can help CoreCivic realize the full potential of its purpose of helping people prepare for the next step in their lives." The outrage was instantaneous. Metro Council member Delishia Porterfield, a TSU graduate, said the move was "unacceptable" and called on students to protest. The Rev. Davie Tucker Jr., who leads Beech Creek Missionary Baptist Church in Nashville, said the move broke his heart. "There can be no (rational) position for such a decision," he wrote on Twitter. "I can't believe that Dr. Glover and/or the people around her think this is a good move." In a 2020 federal financial filing, CoreCivic reported its board members made more than \$200,000 in 2019. Glover defended her initial plans to join the board in a Twitter message Friday morning, saying she wanted to use the post to help incarcerated African Americans. She said she negotiated CoreCivic-funded scholarships and had planned to donate her board compensation to the university. "As the daughter of a civil rights leader, it is my belief that I would be in a better position to help the population that needs it most by speaking from the boardroom where decisions are made," Glover said. Tequila Johnson, a TSU graduate and executive director of The Equity Alliance, was fiercely critical of Glover's decision to join the board. Johnson said she appreciated Glover's decision to rescind that decision. "This is what we wanted her to do but I do think this is something we need to pay close attention to," Johnson said. "This needs to be a message to CoreCivic that you can't cherry pick a Black person and stop us from calling for justice," Johnson said. "They were essentially using Dr Glover as a shield from accountability." Johnson called on other corporations to open their doors to Black leaders. "The only boards that are coming to us are the boards that need us for a PR move," Johnson said. In a statement, CoreCivic spokesperson Amanda Gilchrist said the company respected Glover's decision not to join the board, saying she was "experiencing the impact of misinformation about our company and industry." Gilchrist said CoreCivic hoped to partner with Glover in the future.