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Chairman Kleefisch and members of the committee, thank you for hearing my testimony on AB 360.

AB 360 provides absconder agents with the resources they need to protect themselves and the public as they attempt to get criminals and illegally possessed guns off of the streets.

An absconder agent is a probation, extended supervision, or parole agent whose primary duty is to locate individuals who have absconded from probation, extended supervision, or parole.

Under the bill, the Department of Corrections will provide agents firearm safety training, credentials, a badge and the ammunition needed to perform their job. The department will select the type of firearm agents may purchase and an agent who chooses to carry a firearm will do so at their own expense.

Absconder agents are faced with a number of challenges while locating individuals who have violated their probation, extended supervision or parole. Oftentimes they find themselves out-gunned by dangerous criminals who have violated the terms of their supervision and are in illegal possession of a firearm.

Yet, these agents continue to put themselves into life threatening situations to help our communities become a safer place. The very least we can do is allow them to protect themselves properly while on the job and be on equal footing with the armed criminals that they pursue.

Agents are supposed to be accompanied by police officers when they attempt to apprehend an offender. We have heard how understaffed some local police departments are which has resulted in longer response times in some cases. Understaffing and longer response times can also lead to an absconder agent missing the window of opportunity to apprehend a violent offender because of police shortages. This bill does not remove the requirement for police presence but could help reduce the additional burden placed on police departments when a sufficient number of police officers are unavailable on short notice.

According to a 2006 survey by the American Probation and Parole Association, approximately 40 states and the federal government allow some parole officers to carry firearms. This bill only focuses on absconder agents in Wisconsin.

Refusing to allow Absconder agents to carry a firearm for protection is a tragedy waiting to happen.



This bill is a common sense measure that will allow the individuals who do this important and often times dangerous job to properly protect themselves as they work to keep criminals off the streets.

Again thank you for hearing my testimony on AB 360. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.