



TERRY MOULTON



WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

23RD SENATE DISTRICT

From: Senator Terry Moulton

To: Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Re: **Testimony on Senate Bill 226**
Relating to: the authority for counties to enter into contracts to perform child protective services functions.

Date: August 23, 2017

This bill comes at the request of local officials in Chippewa, Monroe, Pepin and Taylor counties who expressed interest in multi-county cooperation among their Child Protective Services.

In the past few years, northwestern Wisconsin has seen a huge spike in methamphetamine-related child abuse and neglect cases. This influx has tested the limits of county child protective services and has required that county workers who do not ordinarily perform child protective services assist with interviewing those reporting suspected neglect or abuse and document such cases. Senate Bill 226 would allow counties to work together to more efficiently receive, document and evaluate reports of suspected or threatened child abuse or neglect.

Senate Bill 226 would provide statutory authority for a county social or human services departments to contract with other counties to jointly fulfill their duties. Under this bill, contracts would need to be approved by the Department of Children and Families. Duties could include the receipt, documentation and evaluation of a report of child abuse or neglect, investigation or assessment of the report, and providing services including, but not limited to, protection of a child. In addition, under the proposal, counties who contract to delegate services will have the flexibility to contract with a licensed child welfare agency for independent investigations, which will help ensure that such investigations can be completed quickly.

We worked extensively with the Department of Children and Families on this legislation to ensure that both rural and urban counties will benefit from the flexibility this bill provides. Considering the importance of county child protective services in keeping children safe and healthy across the state, I ask you to please recommend the passage of Senate Bill 226 and give county CPS departments the tools they need to collaborate, increase efficiencies and better serve Wisconsin families. Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony today.

Serving the 23rd Senate District



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

KATHY BERNIER

August 23, 2017

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Testimony on Senate Bill 226 – relating to counties entering into contracts to perform child protective services functions

Good morning Chairman Wanggaard and committee members. Thank you for scheduling Senate Bill 226 for this public hearing and allowing me time to present testimony in favor of the bill.

The proposal before you today is a common-sense measure that has received bi-partisan support. The bill has been reviewed and vetted by the Department of Children and Families. In addition to the efforts of state government, counties directly impacted by this proposal have worked together to establish a process that will address the need to promote efficient and cost-effective methods of doing business, while ensuring child protective services (CPS) remain proactive and serve those children and families in need.

Last year, County Human Services Directors from Chippewa, Pepin, Taylor and Monroe brought area legislators together to discuss a concern they had with a statutory barrier that prevented them from fully collaborating to provide child protective services among and between the four counties. We are here today to fix that.

Counties are responsible to provide for the safety and well-being of residents. The ability to share and collaborate to provide high quality services at a reasonable cost is an important and reliable way to provide for public safety and to protect our most valuable resource (our children).

In many cases, counties and municipalities share services. The state legislature has always encouraged collaboration and consolidation where possible and when cost-effective. Current law allows for collaboration involving child protective services, except when it comes to the investigative and intake processes.

Senate Bill 226 provides counties with statutory authority to contract with one or more county departments. Child Protective Service responsibilities will be provided to the children of these counties through collaboration and cooperation. This will certainly provide efficiency, but the necessary protections children need to count on is of the utmost importance in this model. In addition, Department of Children and Families (DCF) will review and approve this kind of arrangement to assure accountability.

Such CPS duties and responsibilities include: receipt, documentation, and evaluation of a report, investigation or assessment of the report, and provisions of services including protection of a child. In addition, under this proposal, counties entering into a consortium arrangement will have the flexibility to contract with a licensed child welfare agency for independent investigations, which will help ensure that such investigations can be completed in a timely and quality manner.

Again, thank you Mr. Chairman and committee members for the opportunity to speak in favor of SB 226. We have several experts in the field of child protective services here today that comment and speak to specific impacts of the bill on county-offered services. With that in mind, I will conclude my testimony and will be happy to answer any questions I can.

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ROB SUMMERFIELD

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 67th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

August 23, 2017

Senator Wanggaard, Chair
Senator Testin, Vice-Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Testimony on 2017 Senate Bill 226
*Relating to the authority for counties to enter into contracts
to perform child protective services functions*

Dear Chairman Wanggaard, Vice-Chairman Testin, and Committee Members:

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify at today's Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety's hearing on 2017 Senate Bill 226. I appreciate your time and consideration of this important legislation.

In 2014, Chippewa, Monroe, Pepin, and Taylor counties began working together, along with the Department of Children and Families (DCF), to form and perfect a group (the "Western Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Partnership") to help carry out Child Protective Services (CPS). Counties may already contract with each other for a variety of services; however, under current law, they are unable to contract with each other to perform CPS.

SB 226 would get rid of this burdensome law and allow for counties to contract with each other to perform CPS. Additionally, it would allow a county, with the permission of DCF, to contract with a licensed child welfare agency to conduct unbiased, independent investigations into reports of child abuse and neglect. While it would immediately impact the previously mentioned counties, it could also open the door for similar partnerships to be created throughout the state.

Many times, especially in rural Wisconsin, our human services departments are understaffed and overworked. However, by allowing counties to contract with one another to perform CPS, we are able to have our communities come together and address these problems as a group; streamlining the process while also providing local, quality services. Children are our future, and as a parent myself, I cannot think of a more commonsense solution to many of the barriers we are experiencing in Wisconsin when it comes to tackling child abuse and neglect.

Before closing, I would also like to thank Senator Moulton, Representative Bernier, Chippewa County Human Services Director Larry Winter, and many others for their hard work and dedication to this issue. Their help and support was crucial for the creation of the bill before you today. Worth noting, the Assembly companion, AB 290, passed the Assembly with overwhelming bipartisan support. Thank you again for listening, and I implore you all to also seriously consider the passage of this positive and necessary legislation.

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

FROM: Sarah Diedrick-Kasdorf, Deputy Director of Government Affairs
Chuck Price, President, Wisconsin County Human Service Association

DATE: August 23, 2017

SUBJECT: Support for Senate Bill 226

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) and Wisconsin County Human Service Association (WCHSA) support Senate Bill 226, which allows counties to work cooperatively on certain child protective services functions.

County governments work hard daily to provide a high level of services to the citizens of this state, while at the same time trying to do so in an efficient manner. However, state statutes often get in the way making it difficult, if not impossible, for counties to achieve efficiencies through innovative collaborations. Senate Bill 226 will make it possible for four counties – Chippewa, Monroe, Taylor, and Pepin – to implement a multi-county access and screening partnership, improving their implementation of, and outcomes in, the child welfare system.

Under current law, counties cannot contract out or ask neighboring counties for assistance with the access and initial assessment functions assigned to child welfare agencies. This becomes an issue in smaller counties as the same staff member cannot make a screening decision and perform initial assessment functions. So, when a staff member is out on an extended leave or out unexpectedly, it is difficult for counties to perform their statutorily required functions. This same issue becomes even more challenging in northern and rural parts of the state when vacancies occur. Retention and recruitment of child welfare workers has always been an issue in certain parts of the state and is exacerbated right now with our increased caseloads. Senate Bill 226 provides counties with the flexibility to address some of these issues that they are unable to address under current state statute.

Senate Bill 226
Page 2
August 23, 2017

The proposed Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN) Partnership is an excellent example of counties working together to find efficiencies and provide services more effectively. However, it is yet another example of how state statutes stifle the ability of counties to work together. This is the third bill counties have had to introduce in the last few legislative sessions to allow counties to provide services in a cooperative manner. The first bill allowed two counties, Jackson and Clark, to share a highway commissioner. The second bill eliminated statutory impediments, clearing the way for the counties of Ozaukee and Washington to share a public health department.

WCA has been working with members of the administration and Legislature on the creation of a "joint agency statute" to make it easier for counties to work together by eliminating the statutory impediments to joint service delivery. Until the "joint agency statute" is enacted, counties will need to continue to come to the Legislature, as have the counties in the CAN Partnership, to seek statutory permission to provide services in a more efficient and effective manner. Counties, and the citizens they serve, however, should not have to wait for the implementation of separate legislation each and every time counties seek to work together to implement efficiencies in service delivery.

WCA supports the innovation proposed by the CAN Partnership and respectfully requests your support for Senate Bill 226.

Thank you for considering our comments.



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Governor Scott Walker
Secretary Eloise Anderson

Secretary's Office

Date: August 23, 2017

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

From: Fredi-Ellen Bove, Administrator
Division of Safety and Permanence

Re: Department Position on SB 226 – In Support

Senator Wanggaard and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 226. My name is Fredi Bove and I am the Administrator for the Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) within the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF). The Department supports the bill.

SB 226 authorizes county human and social service agencies to contract with one another to perform specific child welfare duties on behalf of the agency. This statutory change will enable local county child welfare agencies to achieve cost efficiencies and improve the quality and timeliness of child welfare services. In addition, SB 226 specifies that a county human or social service agency may contract with a licensed child placing agency to perform the independent investigation function. This is necessary when an employee, licensed placement provider or individual in the agency may introduce bias in the child welfare agency's ability to carry out its child protective service (CPS) responsibilities.

As this Committee may be aware, four Wisconsin county child welfare agencies--Pepin, Monroe, Chippewa, and Taylor--initiated a proposal to contract with one another to jointly and on each agency's behalf carry out the CPS reporting duties for their local communities. While the four counties initiated and are leading this effort, the Department is supportive of this regionalized Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN) Reporting Partnership. Their proposal is a way to respond to county interests to generate cost efficiencies and ensure quality service delivery. At the invitation of the four counties, the Department has been actively working with the CAN Partnership counties on the planning and pre-implementation details of its proposal. As part of that process, the Department is making any needed adjustments at the state level, for example, in the state child welfare information system, to accommodate this regionalization approach. The Department appreciates the positive and productive partnership between the Department and the four CAN Partnership county agencies.

In summary, this bill explicitly authorizes local county child welfare agencies, with the necessary and appropriate oversight and approval of the DCF, to work with one another in collaborative

and innovative ways to create both local and potentially system-wide efficiencies and quality improvements in carrying out child welfare responsibilities. For these reasons, the bill is expected to strengthen outcomes for the children and families served by our child welfare system.

The Department thanks Senator Moulton and Representatives Bernier and Summerfield for authoring the bill and thanks the Chair for holding this hearing. We also very much thank the county agency leaders- Paula Winter, Ron Hamilton, Larry Winter and Tammy Steinmetz- as well as their local supervisors, staff and other leaders, for their thoughtful efforts in the development of their proposal. Finally, thank you to the Committee for your consideration of the Department's comments. I am pleased to answer any of your questions.

**2017 - Assembly Bill 290 – Legislation
Public Hearing 415 Northwest**

To: Judiciary and Public Safety Committee
From: Directors of Human Services Chippewa, Monroe, Pepin, and Taylor Counties
Date: August 22, 2017
Subject: Child Abuse & Neglect Partnership (CAN-P)
Re: SB - 226

In June of 2014 the counties of Chippewa, Monroe, Pepin and Clark (Clark decided to not move forward - Taylor joined in 2016) began a discussion on the potential for a multi-county model to provide Child Protective Services (CPS) ACCESS and screening functions. The conditions that prompted this discussion include:

- CPS standards require a high degree of expertise to provide the protection that children deserve.
- ACCESS and screening disparities exist between counties statewide.
- Medium (fewer than 65,000) and smaller counties (Pepin 7,425) have social workers assigned to multiple functions within a Human Service Department. This legislation will allow less populous counties to form partnerships and create the depth of expertise that larger more urban counties enjoy.
- Large counties (above 65,000 pop.) have resources allowing social workers to gain expertise in one of the four functions of CPS which include; access, screening, initial assessment, and ongoing services . Social Workers in medium to small counties are required to juggle multiple responsibilities i.e. juvenile justice, CPS initial assessment, carrying a caseload, and on call for mental health crisis.
- Consumer price index, federal, state, and local financial resources continue to be stagnant resulting in not keeping pace with CPS operational needs (i.e. social worker salary & fringe, increase in foster care due to drug activity, and contracted services with providers).

With that said, Chippewa, Monroe, Pepin, and Taylor counties request your support of 2017 SB – 226, allowing counties the voluntary option to contract with other counties to perform CPS functions. Those served will benefit by:

- Improve consistency across ACCESS and screening functions regardless of geographical location.
- Increase child safety for counties with fewer than 65,000 pop. This allows medium and small counties the luxury of CPS expertise and depth that larger and more urban counties now enjoy across the state.
- Improve information gathering at the point of ACCESS within the CAN – P so that an unnecessary intervention by CPS occurs.
- The alleged maltreater will receive an unbiased screening decision based on the information at the initial access point. Families usually have a history within counties and a county that does its own ACCESS and screening functions develops a historical bias due to the legends families have in a county.

Passage of SB - 226 allows Chippewa, Monroe, Pepin, and Taylor counties the opportunity to achieve the following outcomes:

- Increase supervision and create depth in ACCESS and screening functions so that operational expertise goes uninterrupted regardless of the size of a geographical location.

- The State of Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) will study the accuracy and consistency of a decision at ACCESS and screening, which may lead toward standardization statewide.
- Meet the CPS standards expected by DCF and Wisconsin State Statute Chapter 48.
- Improve information gathering so that screening decisions are reliable and all children remain safe.

Passage of 2017 SB – 226 will allow counties to voluntarily deliver CPS services by individuals that have the greatest degree of knowledge, and skill to perform the duties outlined in the statewide standards. On behalf of Chippewa, Monroe, Pepin, and Taylor counties we extend our sincere thanks for your thoughtful review of SB – 226 and are available to answer your questions.

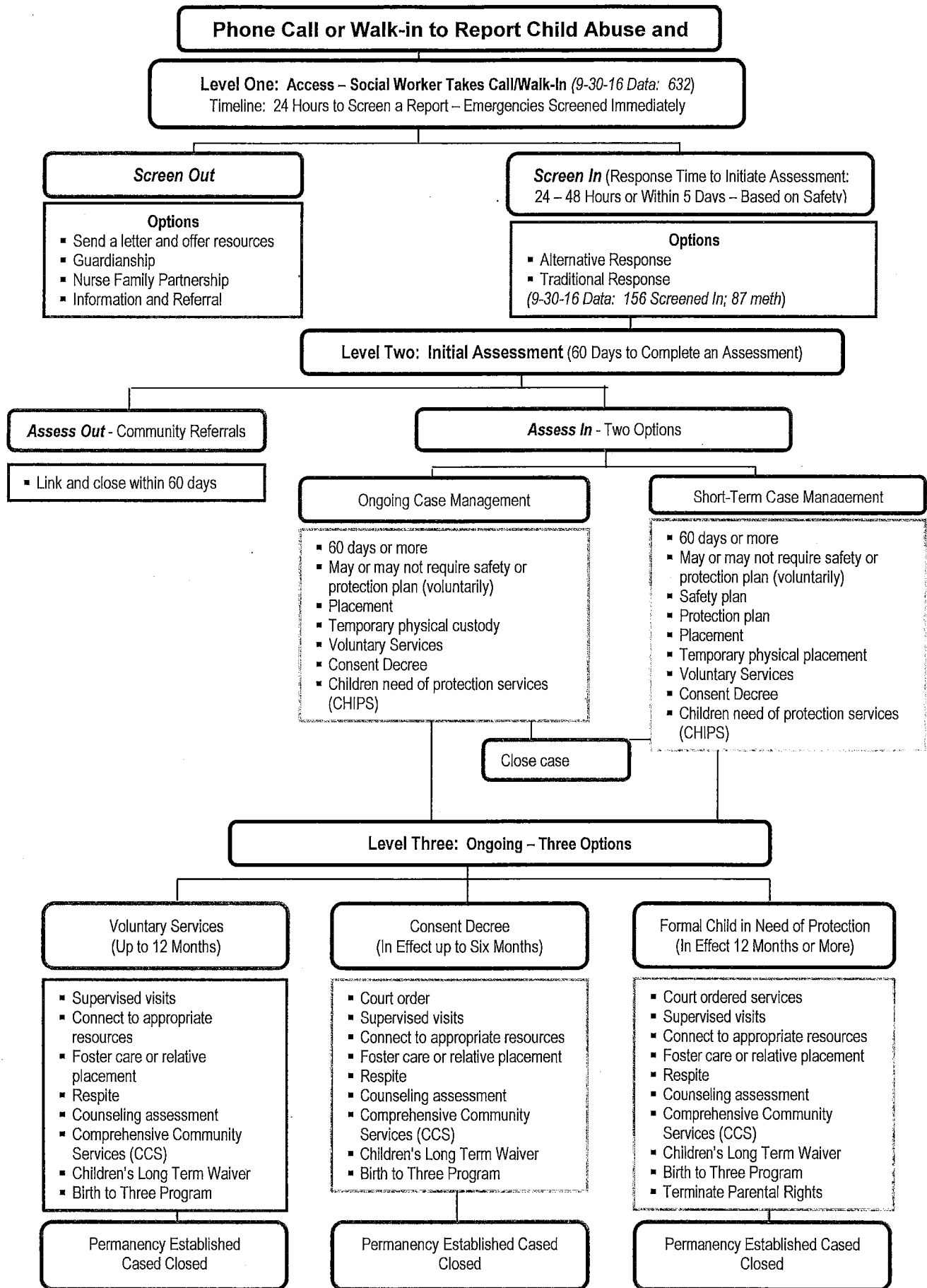
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Mapping – Child Protective Services



Testimony for Public Hearing
Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
August 23, 2017

Rural County Perspective

Over the past several years, counties have seized opportunities to develop shared services in several different program areas. When counties have voluntarily joined to prioritize services, and focus on expertise, we have achieved outcomes that we could not have delivered individually. An example of this type of shared service is the Western Region Recovery and Wellness Consortium. Prior to partnering with nine counties in mental health and substance abuse programing, Pepin County did not provide certified services for its residents. We handled crisis cases, with deep end consumer needs and costs. Today, we have certified programs that offer services to residents that are in all stages of the recovery process, not just those with imminent safety needs. This means that consumers receive services upfront, many times eliminating the need for hospitalization and court intervention. When we developed the mental health and substance abuse consortium along with the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Partnership, it was a priority to focus on higher customer service (safety of individuals) versus cost savings. This Bill is not about saving money, even though there may be some efficiencies gained, rather it is about protection of children.

Rural counties experience different needs than urban. We drive long distances between consumer homes, school districts, and service providers. Most of the service providers are in a community outside of the resident's home. Rural Human Service Departments employs a small number of staff to cover many program areas (wearing multiple hats.) An example, Pepin County has two staff to cover all child protection which includes receipt of reports, investigations, and ongoing services; youth justice services; foster care licensing and placements; kinship care and permanency planning. I am the Director of the county as well as the supervisor for all social service programming and other

department services. The four social service staff employed by Pepin County cover access (the receipt of child protection reports). This means that two of the four workers receiving reports are not trained in child protection but rather are mental health and substance abuse workers. Workers must know all programs thus they cannot be experts in any one area. You have heard Connie speak about the level of expertise needed in child protection. This level of expertise cannot occur in our current model. Rural counties need to have the flexibility to do things differently. The current statutes tie our hands. The passing of Senate Bill 226 will provide the authority for counties to make the necessary changes needed by rural counties to provide expert services that provide for safety of our children and families.

Thank you for your time, consideration and opportunity to speak with you today.

Paula Winter
Director
Pepin County Human Services