



May 27th, 2025

Members of the Senate Committee on Mental Health, Substance Abuse Prevention, and Children and Families
Members of the Assembly Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention

Testimony on 2025 Senate Bill 106, 107, 108, and 109

Thank you, Chair Tittl and other members of both committees, for the opportunity to testify today. I am pleased for the opportunity today to ask for your support for four bills that were developed by the Study Committee on Emergency Detention and Civil Commitment of Minors. I had the pleasure of chairing that study committee last year, which was tasked with studying various issues related to the appropriateness of current emergency detention and involuntary commitment laws as applied to minors.

As many of you know, these issues are deeply personal to me. As a law enforcement officer, some of the most challenging moments on the job come when I'm called to assist someone in the midst of a mental health crisis. It's always difficult, but it's especially heartbreaking when that person is a child. From the start, I hoped this committee would accomplish at least two things. The first was to provide a process to have psychiatric residential treatment facilities (PRTFs) in Wisconsin so kiddos can get the help they need without having to be sent out of the state. The second was to find ways to minimize the involvement of law enforcement in mental health crises so that children in crisis are not further traumatized by being placed in handcuffs.

After careful study and thoughtful consideration, the committee crafted a package of bills that I believe will move the ball closer to these goals. Throughout the process, the committee received assistance from a wide variety of stakeholders and experts, including the Department of Health Services, the Department of Children and Families and the Counties Association, among many others. The committee voted to advance six bills, all with strong support, and the Joint Legislative Council introduced them earlier this year.

Four of these bills are in front of you today:

- **Senate Bill 106 (Assembly Bill 111)** provides a process that would allow for the establishment of Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities, or PRTFs, in Wisconsin. A PRTF provides psychiatric services to individuals under the age of 21 but is not a hospital. For that reason, a PRTF can provide intensive psychiatric treatment in an environment that is less restrictive than a psychiatric hospital. Wisconsin does not currently certify or otherwise regulate PRTFs, so there are none in Wisconsin. This bill provides a framework for PRTFs to operate in Wisconsin. The framework is largely based on federal law, but incorporates some additional state-specific aspects, based on feedback from stakeholders.
- **Senate Bill 107 (Assembly Bill 112)** revises requirements to obtain a minor's consent for mental health services to make it easier for a parent to get their child mental health treatment they know their kiddo needs in circumstances in which the child may be unwilling to consent to treatment. The bill allows either a minor age 14 or older, or the minor's parent or guardian, to consent to begin outpatient or inpatient mental health treatment for the minor. If a parent consented to treatment without the minor's agreement, a petition must be filed for review of the appropriateness of the treatment.
- **Senate Bill 108 (Assembly Bill 113)** establishes a framework for minors to develop and share safety plans to provide guidance to law enforcement, mental health providers, schools, and other persons or entities when they experience a mental health crisis. This bill is modeled on a successful program currently operating in Ashland and Bayfield Counties.

STATE SENATOR

JESSE



JAMES

23RD DISTRICT

- **Senate Bill 109 (Assembly Bill 114)** provides counties with the option to allow certain behavioral health clinicians to initiate the emergency detention of a minor. Most emergency detentions currently begin with a law enforcement officer taking a person into custody. This bill would provide a procedure that would minimize law enforcement involvement and permit emergency detention decisions to be made by approved behavioral health clinicians in consultation with the county human services department. This process is optional for counties under the bill. A county that elects to use the procedure would have the authority to approve individual clinicians and to review and approve each emergency detention. This new procedure would only apply to emergency detentions involving minors.

Before I conclude, I want to take a moment to thank the members of the study committee for their time and dedication. Their insights and expertise were invaluable to this process, and I truly appreciate the effort, thoughtfulness, and commitment each of them brought to our work. I also want to extend my gratitude to the teams at DHS, DCF, the Counties Association, all the other stakeholders who provided essential feedback throughout this process, as well as Legislative Council's David, Margit, and Kelly for all your assistance along the way. Thank you for considering the study committee's recommendations. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jesse James", written in a cursive style.

Senator Jesse James
23rd Senate District
Sen.James@legis.wisconsin.gov



TO: Honorable Chairs Senator Jesse James and Representative Paul Tittl
Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Mental Health, Substance Abuse Prevention, Children & Families and the Assembly Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention

FROM: Kathy Markeland, Executive Director

DATE: May 27, 2025

RE: Support and Comments on Legislation to Improve Youth Mental Health Treatment and Access

On behalf of the members of the Wisconsin Association of Family & Children's Agencies (WAFCA), thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to share our support for legislation emerging from the Legislative Council Study Committee on Emergency Detention and Civil Commitment of Minors. We are grateful for the diligent and thoughtful efforts of the Study Committee participants who devoted their time and expertise to this critical policy discussion. After decades of treating children in need of mental health care as adults, and more than a decade of sending children out of their home state to receive psychiatric mental health care, this legislation reflects the sincere efforts of those closest to the policies, procedures, practices, and service array to craft solutions that respect the lived realities of the children, families, and workforce who move through our care systems daily.

WAFCA is a statewide association that represents private providers delivering essential services, often in partnership with government, and advocates for the more than 200,000 individuals, children, and families that they impact each year. Our members' services include family preservation services; community-based outpatient and day treatment therapies; crisis services; and residential care for both children and adults, among others.

As an integral part of the human services ecosystem, we actively partner with counties, health care, schools, family advocates and others throughout the state to ensure individuals, children and families have the services and supports they need, when and where they need them. Over the past decade, we have been at many tables discussing the challenges associated with our continuum of care and its inability to respond to the changing needs of Wisconsin residents – particularly children with complex needs. It is from this vantage point that we offer the following reflections on the legislation before the committees today.

WAFCA's overarching policy priorities for these proposals include the following key objectives:

- To improve timely, appropriate access to care and address capacity constraints.
- To prevent children from placement out of state.
- To move our system point of access from "placement" to "treatment"
- To deliver better outcomes for children and families by evolving Wisconsin's mental health and substance use systems into a more effective, coordinated system of care that responds to needs in a way that is more therapeutic, holistic, equitable and less punitive.

Support for SB 106/AB 111: Establishing psychiatric residential treatment facilities

SB 106/AB 111 creates a pathway for implementing psychiatric residential treatment facilities (PRTFs) in Wisconsin while empowering the state to plan for regional and statewide capacity needs. In addition, the bill

incorporates the option for facilities to adopt important safety measures, such as video recording and locked options that will support safer environments.

On any given day, more than twenty Wisconsin children are receiving mental health treatment in an out-of-state facility. We know that most children leaving the state to receive psychiatric care are being served in a PRTF. Under this bill, Wisconsin would be able to establish PRTFs which are a unique setting capable of meeting the needs of children presenting with high acuity. The advantages include:

Mental health service covered by health insurance. Under the bill a child could access the intensive services of a PRTF without having to rely on their local county human services department or a protective services or emergency detention order.

Higher security and safety. PRTFs provide a locked setting, if needed, to ensure the safety of a child who may be a danger to themselves, their family, and/or the community due to their untreated or acute mental health condition. Other 24/7 care settings in Wisconsin are unable to provide these secure options due to current regulations and the populations they serve.

Longer periods of care to stabilize and treat mental health conditions. Other resources, such as short-term hospitalizations and/or crisis stabilization facilities, focus on stabilizing and then returning a child to the community for treatment – treatment which may or may not be accessible.

Medicaid reimbursement. As referenced in the bill, psychiatric residential treatment facilities can bill Medicaid and should be included in commercial health insurance plans as well. Other 24/7 care settings providing treatment for children, such as residential care centers, are paid for solely by county dollars.

PRTFs will fill an important gap in Wisconsin's continuum of care and it is imperative that the state move forward with this legislation to move us toward implementation. DHS should receive the necessary staffing and funding resources to certify and support the development of this capacity as expeditiously as possible.

SB 107/AB 112: Revising minor/parent consent for mental health treatment

This proposal would modify current statutes to allow for either a minor age 14 or older, or a parent or guardian, to consent to outpatient or inpatient mental health treatment. WAFCA member agencies provide outpatient mental health and substance use treatment in communities across the state of Wisconsin and appreciate the challenge that SB 107/AB 112 is seeking to address. It is noteworthy that SB 107/AB 112 would not change the expectation that consent be sought from both a minor and a guardian for mental health treatment. The bill establishes that initiation of treatment is permitted if either parent or child consents and then provides appeal options for non-consenting parties. We note that there continue to be questions and practical considerations regarding the implementation of this bill that are worthy of further discussion. For example, in the event of parental non-consent, it is unclear how payment might be secured for the treatment services. In addition, there are questions regarding the efficacy of compelling a minor to access outpatient treatment in the absence of consent.

WAFCA fully appreciates the intention informing SB 107/AB 112 and notes that other key stakeholders, who share the goal of timely access to care, are also raising reasonable questions that should be more fully explored before this legislation advances.

SB 108/AB 113: Sharing minor safety plans

This proposal would require DHS to develop a portal and a statewide mechanism to support sharing minor safety plans to be accessed in the event of a crisis. The proposal builds on the CATCH Safety Plan process whose founders in northern Wisconsin provided compelling testimony regarding the efficacy of sharing safety plans within a network of key partners to better support individuals facing mental health crisis. WAFCA endorses the concept and believes that there is value in the proposed investment in further exploration. We defer to those with greater responsibility for current health care information sharing systems regarding the best options for moving the CATCH model from a pilot into a system with broader reach.

SB 109/AB 114: Clinician initiation of emergency detention of a minor

This proposal creates a process for certain medical and mental health clinicians to initiate the emergency detention of a minor in counties that allow for this to occur. The bill would further require that counties opting to permit clinician initiated holds, must train and certify clinicians who seek to participate in the initiation process. WAFCA supports the intent of this legislation to establish non-law enforcement based options for initiating an emergency hold on a minor. As community-based mental health providers, WAFCA member agencies currently participate in mobile response teams and participate in crisis services/response under contract with county partners. While we envision that some additional clinicians may opt to work with counties to support options in emergency hold procedures, we appreciate that there continue to be significant questions from other stakeholder partners regarding the need for further clarity and definition in order to move the system envisioned in the bill forward. In addition, we understand the bill's allowance for county discretion in adopting this alternative initiation process, however, we question whether this statutory alternative might further exacerbate some of the inconsistencies in practice across the state rather than moving toward a more cohesive mental health crisis response system.

The complexity of the emergency detention process across the state engages a broad range of stakeholders, and WAFCA commits to continuing to engage with counties, health care, advocates, law enforcement, peers, the courts and the Legislature to seek system improvements that reduce the trauma and inequities of our current emergency response and care continuum for all those experiencing a mental health crisis.

Improving the Continuum of Care for Wisconsin's Youth in Crisis and with Complex Mental Health Needs

As noted previously, WAFCA members have long served children and families facing mental health crisis. Our member providers stand at the intersection of our child welfare, youth justice, educational and mental health systems. Too frequently our continuum of care fails to engage with the right response at the right time. We would be remiss in our testimony today if we did not note our support for the initiative represented in SB 110/AB 115 which is not before the committees today, but that we hope will receive serious consideration by this body in the near future. WAFCA endorses SB 110/AB 115 as a proposal to compliment the development of PRTF in the state by simultaneously advancing a statewide youth behavioral health initiative under the Medical Assistance program to provide more comprehensive, community-based, consistent assessment and services to youth with complex needs. We know that there are stakeholder questions about SB 110/AB 115 and we hope that the Legislature will authorize DHS to begin a convening a conversation toward a comprehensive Medicaid waiver for our youth with complex needs. One of the fundamental charges of the Study Committee was to find better solutions for families who are not well supported or served by our current systems, and we believe that the proposal represented in SB 110/AB 115 is a critical building block for the future system we need.

Finally, as the Legislature continues to make progress on the biennial budget, we ask for the Committees' ongoing support for the array of services within our continuum of care to better serve youth with complex needs. Specifically, we call attention to budget proposals to increase Medicaid reimbursement for mental health treatment, adolescent day treatment, school-based mental health and stable funding for specialized residential treatment services. All of these supports help prevent the use of out-of-state treatment facilities and keep Wisconsin children here in our communities for care.

WAFCA would again like to express appreciation to the legislators, legislative staff and community members who devoted their time and expertise through the Study Committee to formulating improvements to our mental health systems of care for Wisconsin children and youth. We look forward to continuing to contribute to the advancement and refinement of all of these important proposals and welcome the questions and insights of the of this body as you continue to deliberate and move these proposals forward.

**COMMENTS TO THE PUBLIC HEARING OF THE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON MENTAL
HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION AND THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

MAY 27, 2025.

GOOD MORNING MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON MENTAL HEALTH AND
SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION AND THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON MENTAL HEALTH,
SUBSTANCE ABUSE, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES. THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING ME TO
SHARE MY COMMENTS REGARDING THE BILLS YOU ARE CONSIDERING THIS MORNING.

MY NAME IS SHARON McILQUHAM. I AM THE CORPORATION COUNSEL FOR EAU CLAIRE
COUNTY AND I HAVE WORKED IN THE CORPORATION COUNSEL'S OFFICE FOR 24 YEARS.
FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THE CORPORATION COUNSEL'S
OFFICE DOES, AMONG OTHER THINGS OUR OFFICE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CHAPTER 51
MENTAL HEALTH COMMITMENTS, CHAPTER 54 AND 55 CASES – WHICH ARE
GUARDIANSHIPS AND PROTECTIVE PLACEMENTS, CHAPTER 48 AND 938 CASES – WHICH
ARE CHIPS (explained), JIPS (explained), AND TPR'S (explained).

I WAS A MEMBER OF THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STUDY COMMITTEE ON
EMERGENCY DETENTION AND CIVIL COMMITMENT OF MINORS, WHICH MET MONTHLY
FROM AUGUST THROUGH DECEMBER OF 2024. OUR COMMITTEE WAS MADE UP A
DIVERSE GROUP OF PEOPLE, INCLUDING MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS, SOCIAL WORKERS,
LAW ENFORCEMENT, PUBLIC DEFENDER, AND JUDGE. THROUGH OUR WORK WE HAVE
RECOMMENDED THE BILLS YOU ARE CONSIDERING TODAY.

IF I MAY, I WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT ON EACH OF THEM. I'LL TRY TO KEEP MY
COMMENTS BRIEF, BUT GIVEN I'M AN ATTORNEY, THAT MAY BE MORE DIFFICULT FOR ME
THAN OTHERS YOU'LL HEAR FROM TODAY.

**SPECIFICALLY REGARDING ASSEMBLY BILL 111/SENATE BILL 106, I WOULD STRONGLY
ENCOURAGE YOU TO SUPPORT THIS BILL. THIS BILL PRIMARILY DEALS WITH THE
CREATION OF PSYCHIATRIC RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT FACILITIES (PRTF'S) TO
PROVIDE INPATIENT PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS UNDER AGE 21. I
CAN'T EMPHASIZE ENOUGH HOW IMPORTANT THIS BILL IS TO NOT ONLY EAU CLAIRE
COUNTY, BUT ALL 72 COUNTIES IN WISCONSIN.**

WHEN A MINOR IS EXPERIENCING A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS AND IS DEEMED TO BE A
DANGER TO THEMSELVES OR OTHERS, AN EMERGENCY DETENTION CAN BE PURSUED BY
LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS IF AUTHORIZED BY THE COUNTY OR THEIR DESIGNEE. IN

EAU CLAIRE COUNTY, FOR AFTER HOURS COVERAGE, WE CONTRACT WITH NORTHWEST CONNECTIONS TO PROVIDE CRISIS SUPPORT AND THE ABILITY TO AUTHORIZE AN EMERGENCY DETENTION. AN EMERGENCY DETENTION IS A 72 HOUR HOLD WHERE THE PERSON IS PLACED IN A LOCKED INPATIENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH FACILITY FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY, TREATMENT, AND OBSERVATION. THERE ARE FEW HOSPITALS THAT HAVE AN INPATIENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH UNIT, AND EVEN FEWER THAT ACCEPT JUVENILE OR MINOR PATIENTS. AS AN EXAMPLE, EAU CLAIRE COUNTY HAD TWO HOSPITALS WITH INPATIENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH UNITS. HOWEVER, ONLY ONE OF THOSE HOSPITALS (HSHS, SACRED HEART) HAD THE CAPABILITY TO ACCEPT JUVENILE/MINOR PATIENTS. SINCE HSHS CLOSED IN MARCH 2024, ANY JUVENILE DETAINED IN EAU CLAIRE COUNTY HAS NEEDED TO BE TRANSPORTED ACROSS THE STATE TO WINNEBAGO MENTAL HEALTH INSTITUTE. THE PLACEMENT AT WWMI MEANS THAT AT LEAST FOR EAU CLAIRE COUNTY RESIDENTS, THESE MINOR ARE PLACED 3 HOURS AWAY FROM THEIR FAMILY MAKING IT DIFFICULT FOR MOST FAMILIES TO MAINTAIN IN PERSON CONTACT DURING THE MINOR'S PLACEMENT AT THE FACILITY. NOT ONLY IS THE TRANSPORTATION OF THE MINOR TO THE FACILITY TIME CONSUMING, BUT IT ALSO COMES AT A SIGNIFICANT COST. TRANSPORTATION FROM A CONTRACTED PROVIDER FROM EAU CLAIRE COUNTY TO WWMI IS APPROXIMATELY \$1600 ONE WAY.

IT IS CRUCIALLY IMPORTANT WHEN PRTF'S ARE FORMED, THE REQUIREMENT FOR AT LEAST ONE FACILITY TO BE LOCATED IN THE NORTHERN OR NORTH-CENTRAL REGION OF WISCONSIN BE MAINTAINED IN THIS BILL. I ALSO SUPPORT THE REQUIREMENT FOR AT LEAST ONE FACILITY TO BE LOCATED IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE STATE. IT'S CRUCIAL THAT MINOR THROUGHOUT THE STATE HAVE ACCESS TO THESE FACILITIES WHICH SHOULD BE LOCATED CLOSER TO THEIR HOMES. IT IS IMPREATIVE THAT THE REQUIREMENT THE PRTF SERVICES BE REIMBURSABLE THROUGH MEDICAL ASSISTANCE (SUBJECT TO FEDERAL APPROVAL) SO AS TO NOT PUT AN UNDUE BURDEN ON THE FAMILIES AND THE PATIENT'S COUNTY OF RESIDENCE.

THIS BILL ALLOWS FOR VIDEO MONITORING FOR THE SAFETY OF THE PATIENTS AND STAFF IN THE COMMON AREAS, ENTRANCES, AND EXITS OF THE FACILITIES. THIS VIDEO MONITORING CAN HELP ENSURE THE PATIENTS ARE EVEN MORE CLOSELY MONITORED. ALLOWING THE VIDEO MONITORING IN THE COMMON AREAS WILL ALSO GREATLY DECREASE THE POSSIBILITY OF ELOPEMENT. I COMPLETELY SUPPORT THAT THESE VIDEO RECORDINGS REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL AND NOT OPEN TO PUBLIC INSPECTION TO PROTECT PATIENT PRIVACY CONCERNS.

THE PRTF'S CAN ALSO BE AN INCREDIBLE ASSET TO MINORS SUBJECT TO NOT ONLY A CHAPTER 51 ORDER, BUT ALSO THOSE SUBJECT TO A CHIPS ORDER. THERE ARE

UNFORTUNATELY MINORS WHO HAVE HIGH ACUITY PSYCHIATRIC NEEDS CAN BE AND ARE PLACED OUTSIDE THE STATE OF WISCONSIN DUE TO A VARIETY OF REASONS. THERE ARE SOME REASONS FOR THESE OUT OF STATE PLACEMENTS. THERE IS A DEFINITE SHORTAGE OF PSYCHIATRIC RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES IN WISCONSIN THAT ACCEPT PLACEMENTS OF MINORS. THE BEHAVIORAL AND PSYCHIATRIC NEEDS OF THE MINORS ARE SUCH THAT MANY OF THE FACILITIES IN THE STATE ARE UNABLE TO ADDRESS THE MINORS' HIGH NEEDS. IN ADDITION, MANY FACILITIES ARE UNWILLING TO ACCEPT THESE PATIENTS REGARDLESS OF THE RATES THE COUNTIES ARE WILLING TO PAY. MANY JUST DON'T WANT THE LIABILITY THAT COMES ALONG WITH MINORS WITH SUCH HIGH NEEDS.

BEFORE AN OUT OF STATE PLACEMENT IS EVEN CONSIDERED, COUNTIES HAVE SENT REQUESTS FOR PLACEMENT TO UP TO 100 FACILITIES IN WISCONSIN. MANY FACILITIES JUST REFUSE TO ACCEPT PLACEMENT OF THE MINOR DUE TO THEIR HIGH NEEDS, REGARDLESS OF THE DAILY RATE THE COUNTY IS WILLING TO PAY. IT WOULD BE MY RECOMMENDATION, OR SHOULD I SAY REQUEST, THAT IN ORDER TO REDUCE OR ELIMINATE THESE OUT OF STATE PLACEMENTS THAT PARTS BE REQUIRED TO ACCEPT THESE PLACEMENT OR BE OFFERED SOME TYPE OF INCENTIVES TO ACCEPT WISCONSIN'S MINOR RESIDENTS INTO THEIR FACILITIES, AND/OR BE REQUIRED TO "SAVE" A CERTAIN NUMBER OF BEDS FOR WISCONSIN MINORS.

THE NEED FOR WISCONSIN TO HAVE FACILITIES TO TREAT THESE HIGH ACUITY MINORS IS SIGNIFICANT. MINORS WHO ARE PLACED OUT OF STATE ARE UNABLE TO SEE THEIR FAMILY AS OFTEN AS WHEN THE MINOR IS PLACED IN WISCONSIN. WE ARE DOING A DISSERVICE TO BOTH THESE MINORS AND THEIR FAMILIES WHEN PLACEMENTS CANNOT BE LOCATED IN WISCONSIN.

MOVING ON THE ASSEMBLY BILL 112/SENATE BILL 107, THIS BILL REVISES REQUIREMENTS TO OBTAIN A MINOR'S CONSENT FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

THE BILL ALLOWS EITHER A MINOR AGE 14 OR OLDER, OR THE MINOR'S PARENT OR GUARDIAN, TO CONSENT TO BEGIN OUTPATIENT OR INPATIENT MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT FOR THE MINOR. IF A PARENT CONSENTED TO TREATMENT WITHOUT THE MINOR'S AGREEMENT, A PETITION MUST BE FILED FOR REVIEW OF THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE TREATMENT.

UNDER CURRENT LAW, IF A MINOR IS AGE 14 OR OLDER, BOTH THE MINOR'S AND THE PARENT'S MUTUAL CONSENT ARE REQUIRED FOR OUTPATIENT OR INPATIENT MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT. VERY GENERALLY, IF A MINOR OR PARENT REFUSES TO PROVIDE

CONSENT FOR TREATMENT, THE OTHER PARTY MAY PETITION FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL TO BEGIN OUTPATIENT OR INPATIENT TREATMENT. IF THE MINOR IS UNDER AGE 14, THE PARENTS/GUARDIANS HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO CONSENT TO THEIR MINOR CHILD TO RECEIVE INPATIENT MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT.

THIS CHANGE GIVES MORE ABILITY, SUBJECT TO REVIEW, FOR EITHER THE PARENT/GUARDIAN OR THE MINOR TO CONSENT TO TREATMENT. WHILE I'VE HEARD QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS REGARDING THIS PROPOSED CHANGE MAY ERODE THE PARENTAL AUTHORITY, I DO NOT VIEW IT THAT WAY. WHILE I WOULD IMAGINE MOST OF YOU WHO ARE PARENTS OR GUARDIANS WOULD LIKELY CONSENT TO YOUR MINOR CHILD RECEIVING NECESSARY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, THERE ARE MANY SITUATIONS I'M FAMILIAR WITH WHERE THE PARENTS/GUARDIANS ARE REFUSING TO ALLOW THEIR MINOR CHILD TO RECEIVE THE NECESSARY SERVICES, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE MINOR WANTS THEM. DURING MY TIME AT THE CORPORATION COUNSEL'S OFFICE, FOR APPROXIMATELY 14 YEARS I WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE JUVENILE CASES, IN CASES WHERE THE MINORS WERE VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT. SOME OF THE PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF THOSE CHILDREN WHO WERE UNDER A CHIPS ORDER DID NOT WANT THEIR MINOR CHILD TO RECEIVE ANY TYPE OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, EVEN IF THE MINOR CHILD WANTED TO RECEIVE SUCH SERVICES. I'VE SPECULATED THE POSSIBLE REASON FOR THIS COULD BE THEIR DISTRUST OF MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS OR THE GOVERNMENT, OR EVEN THE POSSIBILITY THEY ARE CONCERNED WHAT THE MINOR MAY DISCLOSE DURING THEIR TREATMENT.

REGARDLESS OF THE REASONS, THIS BILL ALLOWS FOR EITHER THE PARENT/GUARDIAN OR THE MINOR AGE 14 OR OLDER TO CONSENT TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, SUBJECT TO A REVIEW THAT CAN BE REQUESTED BY EITHER PARTY. I SUPPORT THIS CHANGE TO THE CURRENT STATUTE AND ENCOURAGE YOU TO SUPPORT IT AS WELL.

ASSEMBLY BILL 113/SENATE BILL 108 ALLOWS FOR ADDITIONAL CONSENTUAL EXCHANGE OF IMPORTANT MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION. THE PLAN IS FOR A SAFETY PLAN SHARING PORTAL TO BE DEVELOPED THAT WOULD BE AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE STATE. THESE SAFETY PLANS WOULD BE SHARED WITH THE WRITTEN CONSENT OR A RELEASE OF INFORMATION SIGNED BY THE MINOR. THIS SAFETY PLAN CAN BE ACCESSED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT DURING A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS IN ORDER TO OBTAIN VALUABLE INFORMATION TO PROVIDE SUPPORTS AND ASSISTANCE TO THE MINOR. AT PRESENT, A PROGRAM LIKE THIS, CALLED THE "CATCH" PROGRAM IS BEING UTILIZED IN ASHLAND AND BAYFIELD COUNTIES. HAVING A STATEWIDE PORTAL THAT ALLOWS FOR ACCESS TO THIS ESSENTIAL INFORMATION CAN BE VERY BENEFICIAL TO

THE MINOR WHO HAS AGREED TO THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION. DUE TO MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION, ESPECIALLY THAT OF A MINOR, BEING CONFIDENTIAL AND PROTECTED, WHEN A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER RESPONDS TO A CRISIS SITUATION, THEY HAVE LITTLE TO NO KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT ISSUES OR CHALLENGES THE MINOR FACES. IF THERE IS ACCESS TO INFORMATION THAT CAN ASSIST WITH DE-ESCALATION OR FINDING SUPPORTS FOR THE MINOR, IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO AVOID ANY FURTHER TYPE OF COURT INTERVENTION, YET STILL PROVIDE THE NECESSARY ASSISTANCE TO THE MINOR. THIS SYSTEM WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO LAW ENFORCEMENT, EMERGENCY SERVICE PERSONNEL, HUMAN SERVICES AND MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS, AS WELL AS SCHOOL DISTRICTS, WHO WITH THIS INFORMATION WILL BE BETTER ABLE TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO THE MINOR. AND GIVEN THAT THE MINOR CONSENTS TO THE SAFETY PLAN BEING SHARED, THE MINOR MAY BE MORE WILLING TO COOPERATE IN THE SERVICES BEING OFFERED. I BELIEVE THIS IS A GOOD START AT PROVIDING THE NECESSARY INFORMATION TO ASSIST MINORS EXPERIENCING MENTAL HEALTH CRISES.

ASSEMBLY BILL 114/SENATE BILL 109 - THIS BILL ALLOWS A COUNTY, OTHER THAN MILWAUKEE COUNTY, TO ELECT TO AUTHORIZE CERTAIN MEDICAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CLINICIANS TO INITIATE EMERGENCY DETENTIONS OF MINORS AND CREATES A PROCESS FOR CLINICIAN-INITIATED DETENTIONS IN COUNTIES THAT ELECT TO ALLOW CLINICIANS TO INITIATE EMERGENCY DETENTIONS. CURRENTLY, EMERGENCY DETENTIONS ARE PRIMARILY INITIATED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS, OR POSSIBLY BY COUNTY CRISIS SOCIAL WORKERS.

THIS BILL EXPANDS THE ABILITY TO DETAIN TO AUTHORIZED MEDICAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CLINICIANS TO INITIATE AN EMERGENCY DETENTION OF MINORS. AN IMPORTANT PART OF THIS LEGISLATION REQUIRES THESE PROVIDERS OBTAIN THE NECESSARY TRAINING PRIOR TO THEIR AUTHORITY TO DETAIN AND STILL REQUIRES COUNTY APPROVAL FOR THE DETENTION TO OCCUR. THE PROVISIONS OF HOW THE EMERGENCY DETENTION PROCEEDS THROUGH THE LEGAL PROCESS REMAINS THE SAME, WITH THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE CLINICIAN TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY PAPERWORK TO THE COUNTY CORPORATION COUNSEL THE NEXT BUSINESS DAY.

THE BILL GIVES EACH COUNTY THE ABILITY TO CHOOSE WHETHER THEY ELECT TO ALLOW CLINICIANS TO INITIATE EMERGENCY DETENTIONS, A PROVISION I SUPPORT AS I BELIEVE EACH COUNTY IS IN THE BEST POSITION TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER OR NOT THIS TYPE OF EXPANSION OF THE CURRENT LAW IS SOMETHING THEY WANT TO OR ARE WILLING TO EXPLORE.

IN CLOSING I WANT TO EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STUDY COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY DETENTION AND CIVIL COMMITMENT OF MINORS. I MET SEVERAL COLLEAGUES WHO ALL SHARED THE SAME COMMITMENT AS I DO, WHICH IS TO DO WHAT WE COULD TO IMPROVE OUR CURRENT SYSTEM OF HANDLING MENTAL HEALTH COMMITMENTS FOR MINORS. THE MEMBERS EXPRESSED SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT FOR CREATING PRTF'S TO ALLOW FOR ADEQUATE AND MORE LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT FOR THE MINORS WHO ARE IN NEED OF SUCH SERVICES. I SUPPORT ALL THE LEGISLATION FORWARDED BY THE STUDY COMMITTEE AND HOPE MY COMMENTS TODAY WILL HELP YOU TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORTING THIS LEGISLATION AS WELL.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION TODAY AND I WOULD WELCOME ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Tony Evers, Governor
Kirsten L. Johnson, Secretary

TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Mental Health, Substance Abuse Prevention, Children and Families and of the Assembly Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention

FROM: Arielle Exner, Legislative Director

DATE: May 27, 2025

RE: Senate Bill 106/Assembly Bill 111, Senate Bill 107/Assembly Bill 112, Senate Bill 108/Assembly Bill 113

The Department of Health Services appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony for information only on three of the six bills brought forward by the Legislative Council Study Committee on Emergency Detention and Civil Commitment of Minors. The Department appreciated its collaboration with the Study Committee over the latter half of last year on potential solutions to addressing the behavioral health needs of our state's children. While DHS has additional context to provide regarding SB 107/AB 112, the Department recommends that SB 106/AB 111 and SB 108/AB 113 be amended to include the grant funding and necessary resources for DHS to carry out the tasks enumerated.

DHS came before the Study Committee twice throughout its deliberations. During the Department's presentation at the August Study Committee meeting, the Department provided an overview of the emergency detention and involuntary commitment procedures as well as the Department's crisis services and facilities. At the December Study Committee meeting, the Department raised specific concerns and recommendations on the prior iterations of these three pieces of legislation. Additionally, the Department expressed support for the cross-agency proposal, now SB 110/AB 115 as introduced by the Study Committee, which authorizes DHS to create a new behavioral health Medicaid program for children and youth with the most complex needs by allowing the Department to submit a Medicaid waiver to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide reimbursement for these services.

SB 106/AB 111

Under this proposal, DHS may certify psychiatric residential treatment facilities (PRTFs) to provide inpatient psychiatric services for individuals under age 21, under the direction of a physician, with services provided by a facility that meets PRTF standards under federal regulations. PRTF services would be reimbursable as a Medical Assistance (MA) benefit and DHS would be allowed to seek any necessary federal approvals for the creation of PRTFs.

DHS appreciated the Study Committee's ongoing discussion about the need to establish PRTFs in Wisconsin in order to serve some of the state's most vulnerable children by addressing a gap in the state's mental health continuum of care with the goal of diminishing the number of out-of-state placements. DHS thanks the Study Committee for incorporating many of the recommendations the Department provided.

However, DHS would like to reiterate that this proposal would allow PRTFs to deny admission, therefore, the Department anticipates that out-of-state placements would continue, most likely for children with the most complex needs. For example, since the establishment of PRTFs upon passage of legislation in 2015, the Minnesota Department of Health Services have shared ongoing concerns about these facilities denying admission, especially given none of these facilities serve children with co-occurring disorders.

This legislation gives the Department the authority to distribute grants for development of PRTFs without providing funding. In his 2023-25 and 2025-27 biennial budget proposals, Governor Evers included \$1.8 million for the Department to support PRTFs. This grant funding could help support start-up costs for a facility, fund costs for uninsured youth, and supplement operations cost, particularly when a facility is under utilized. Notably, contract agreements would allow DHS to ensure the state's objectives are being met, such as curtailing the denial of high acuity admissions.

Lastly, this legislation provides the position authority for four new FTE positions, as the Department requested at the December meeting, to develop the administrative rules, manage the certification process, establish Medicaid rates, and monitor and evaluate the program. However, the legislation does not include the funding for those positions. It would not be feasible to pursue opening a PRTF in Wisconsin if these staffing needs are not met.

SB 107/AB 112

This legislation modifies the consent process for minors aged 14 and older seeking mental health treatment, shifting from the current system where both the parent or guardian and the youth must consent to treatment. Under the current law, if both parties do not consent to treatment, there is a mechanism for the consenting party to petition for review and approval of treatment. Under this proposed bill, either the minor or the parent may consent independently, and if one party disagrees, a petition for review can be filed under Chapter 51.14. The Department acknowledges the sensitivity of altering the consent process, and the lack of agreement amongst professionals about the appropriate age for consenting to services.

As the Department discussed with the Study Committee, the Department remains interested in future discussions with the State Legislature about how to ensure youth and families know their rights and that providers are knowledgeable and can participate in the petition process.

SB 108/AB 113

SB 108/AB 113 directs DHS to develop and maintain a statewide portal to facilitate the sharing of safety plans for minors among safety plan partners. DHS recognizes that a shared portal may help facilitate and inform responses to a behavioral health crisis for those minors. The legislation does not include resources nor funding for the one FTE position included. The cost for the Department itself to develop and maintain the platform as the bill requires would be high and cannot be determined at this time. Per the legislation, the Department could also make payments to the state's electronic health information exchange to develop and maintain a portal. If the Department were to contract for a system, DHS expects to need \$546,200 GPR in the first year and \$455,200 GPR annually thereafter with costs rising annually along with inflation. Without the necessary resources, the Department will not be able to successfully implement this statewide information sharing system.

DHS thanks both Committees for the opportunity to provide testimony.

May 22, 2025

To Chairman James, Chairman Tittl, and fellow Committee Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to speak this morning.

It is my pleasure to offer WISHIN's strong support of the concept and intent of 2025 Senate Bill 108 (SB108) to create a new platform to share safety plans for minors at risk of behavioral health crisis. In a time of increased behavioral health needs across the state, these shared safety plans are an innovative strategy to break down silos between hospitals, clinics, community members, first responders, and others in the health care delivery system. A mission WISHIN has carried out for nearly 15 years.

The Wisconsin Statewide Health Information Network, Inc. (WISHIN) is an independent, not-for-profit organization dedicated to bringing the benefits of widespread, HIPAA-compliant, secure, and interoperable health information technology to providers, pharmacists, care managers, post-acute facilities, payers, EMS and many others as the state-designated Health Information Exchange (HIE) since 2009 under § 153. During this time, we have connected to over 2,200 health care sites across the state, and I believe supporting policy like this is exactly why WISHIN exists.

Since 2021, WISHIN has partnered with the Chequamegon Accountable: the Community for Health (CA:tCH) to provide a digital platform for Ashland and Bayfield County to create and share safety plans for its community members at risk of or experiencing a behavioral health crisis. These safety plans are a unique part of the WISHIN network that provides non-clinical information to first responders in with specific instructions on how handle crisis on a case-by-case basis.

It empowers those at risk to have a say in how they are engaged when they are at their most vulnerable, empowers first responders to deescalate and stabilize those in crisis, and preliminary data shows the intervention has the potential to significantly reduce emergency detentions, freeing up much-needed hospital space.

Unlike all other WISHIN data these safety plans require informed consent and release of information from the individual so that it can be shared beyond the HIPPA-covered health care and government Health and Human Services care team members to also include Police, Fire and other First Responders and available to School District care team members.

WISHIN is well-positioned to scale the existing work and incorporate lessons learned from the CA:tCH partnership to create a statewide safety plan exchange. This is a fantastic concept and WISHIN stands ready to work with this committee and the Authors of this bill to create a flexible and scalable statewide solution which meets the intent of this bill. Additionally, WISHIN can incorporate flexibility within the technology to expand to support adults experiencing behavioral health crisis in the same way.

WISHIN is proud to write in support of SB108 and I thank you for your time this morning.

Sincerely,



Steve Rottmann, CEO
Wisconsin Statewide Health Information Network, Inc.
5510 Research Park Dr Suite 200
Fitchburg, WI 53711

Date: May 27, 2025

From: NAMI Wisconsin, the National Alliance on Mental Illness,

Mary Kay Battaglia, Executive Director

Sita Diehl, Public Policy and Advocacy Director

To:

Senate Committee on Mental Health, Substance Abuse Prevention, Children and Families

Assembly Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse

NAMI Wisconsin applauds the Wisconsin Legislature for the intent to improve statutes concerning the emergency detention of minors in psychiatric crises. The Legislative Committee on the Emergency Detention of Minors process has been thorough and has produced helpful recommendations. NAMI Wisconsin is the state organization of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. We represent Wisconsin residents with serious mental illness, their families and supporters. NAMI 22 local affiliates offer support, education, and advocacy to improve quality of life for people with mental illness and promote recovery.

NAMI Wisconsin recognizes and supports system improvements which improve early identification of mental health needs and early, community-based intervention which address serious mental illness as it emerges. Positive and supportive response to these crises enable the person to pursue a meaningful, productive life and avoid long term disability and dependence on public resources. We also recognize that, even when these safeguards are in place, there will continue to be children and youth who require involuntary commitment to psychiatric care. NAMI generally supports the following legislation to address this need, although we have concerns and suggest further analysis for the proposal for consent to treatment for minors who are age 14 and older which we note in comments below.

Clinician initiation of emergency detention of a minor: [SB109/ AB114](#).

NAMI Wisconsin supports this legislation to authorize certain medical and behavioral health clinicians to initiate the emergency detention of a minor and would create a process for clinician-initiated detentions in counties that elect to allow clinicians to initiate emergency detentions. It is our view that current Wisconsin statute relies too heavily on law enforcement in the emergency detention process. Requiring law enforcement to place the commitment order creates the impression that emergency detention is a criminal process, rather than a civil and medical process, adding stress and confusion for the youth in crisis and the family or guardian. This bill would bring Wisconsin into alignment with practice in most states by allowing either a designated clinician *or* law enforcement officer to place an emergency hold on an individual for the purpose of determining eligibility for involuntary commitment.

Psychiatric residential treatment facilities, providing an exemption from emergency rule procedures, and granting rule-making authority: [SB106/ AB111](#)

NAMI Wisconsin supports this bill to authorize the Department of Health Services (DHS) to establish a certification process for and certify psychiatric residential treatment facilities (PRTFs) to provide inpatient psychiatric services for individuals under age 21, with PRTF services being a reimbursable Medical Assistance (MA) benefit. On any given day, as many as twenty Wisconsin children receive mental health services in psychiatric residential treatment facilities (PRTF) outside of Wisconsin because we do not have the right level of care to support them here. Supporting high needs children in-state will provide for better transition from inpatient to community care and improve opportunities for family and school engagement.

Consent to mental health treatment by minors who are age 14 or older: [SB107/ AB112](#)

The bill revises requirements to obtain a minor's consent for mental health services. The bill allows either a minor age 14 or older, or the minor's parent or guardian, to consent to begin outpatient or inpatient mental health or substance use treatment for the minor. If a parent consented to treatment without the minor's agreement, a petition must be filed for review of the appropriateness of the treatment. NAMI Wisconsin views this as an improvement on current law which prevents treatment from proceeding if either the minor or the parent/guardian refuses. However, we have the following concerns:

- NAMI recommends insertion of a requirement that the minor **and parent/guardian** must receive information on the consent provisions of this bill at the earliest opportunity in the process of applying for inpatient or outpatient treatment. This should include written information and verbal instruction on the minor's rights and the parent/guardian rights

and responsibilities. Too often, such information is provided too late in the process to enable the parent/guardian or minor to make informed decisions or take action.

- The language in the bill moves from mental illness, developmental disability, and minors with treatment for alcoholism or drug abuse inconsistently. Is the intent to differentiate the services and who can request treatment?
- We are concerned about who has liability and who pays for treatment when the child consents, but the parent or guardian refuses care. If a component of the parent's refusal is based on concern for the financial obligation, what alternative provisions would be available to pay for care?
- If there is disagreement between the minor and their parent/guardian about outpatient treatment, we would like the minor to receive initial treatment while a decision to refuse care is under consideration by the court.
- Would a facility take the liability if the child elects to participate in inpatient care and the parent or guardian refuses? Who is liable if the minor is harmed or harms another person while in the facility? We understand that a facility is currently liable to maintain safety for individuals in their care, but we are concerned that treatment proceeding despite parental refusal may increase the likelihood of legal action.
- For inpatient care, we concur with the recommendation of the Wisconsin Psychological Association that the minor should receive treatment for 5 working days or until the court makes a dispensation on the case, whichever is soonest.
- We highly recommend inclusion of a requirement that this legislation would apply to only recognized standard mental health practice and/or evidence-based therapies.

Sharing minors' safety plans: [SB108/](#) [AB113](#)

NAMI Wisconsin supports this legislation with one recommendation regarding the WISHIN health information system. We promote the use of crisis plans and safety plans as an effective practice to enable the person and their supporters to prevent mental health crises, to share necessary information and to describe and state preferences for action should a crisis occur. We applaud the CAATCH Safety Plan process on which this legislation is based, allowing information not protected under confidentiality statute to be shared as specified by the person and with parties specified by the person. We fully support the inclusion of these plans in the WISHIN health information system, although we encourage the legislature to consult with WISHIN personnel prior to this bill moving forward to ensure that provisions will allow for information to be collected and shared as intended in the legislation.

A pilot school-centered mental health program: [AB260/ SB245](#)

NAMI Wisconsin supports this pilot of school-centered mental health services to serve at-risk students and families at school, at home, and in the community and serve students and families year-round. The pilot will include classroom observations and pupil-specific behavior intervention, including evidence-based individual or family therapy, and provide family coaching that is aligned with therapeutic goals. We prefer the model identified in this bill because it brings specialty mental health expertise into the school. This facilitates continuity of evidence-based care and allows services to be provided on site without requiring parents to take time from work to transport their children to appointments. This model enables children and families to continue care and coaching when school is not in session or when the child is unable to attend school. Finally, embedding mental health experts on site at the school allows for faculty consultation on in-class supports, and general education of faculty and the student body regarding healthy school culture.

NAMI Wisconsin is encouraged by these proposed bills that will promote early intervention, effective crisis response and access to mental health care for children and youth. Should you require further information, please contact NAMI Wisconsin's Executive Director, Mary Kay Battaglia at marykay@namiwisconsin.org.