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# PATRICK SNYDER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 85<sup>th</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

## Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 201

Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

April 23, 2025

Chairman Spiros and Members of the Committee:

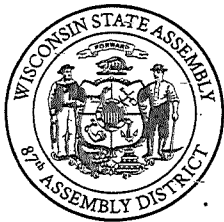
Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to testify today on this incredibly important issue. A short time ago, I was unfamiliar with "sextortion". However, when I heard about what happened to Bradyn in early March, I knew that we needed to act.

I will leave to it Bradyn's family to tell his story. However, it is important to note that sextortion crimes are on the rise across the nation. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), "From October 2021 to March 2023, the FBI and Homeland Security Investigations received over 13,000 reports of online financial sextortion of minors. The sextortion involved at least 12,600 victims—primarily boys—and led to at least 20 suicides."

These cases often begin when someone (often young but not exclusively) believes they are communicating with someone their own age who is interested in a relationship. After the victim shares revealing photos, the criminals threaten to share those victim's photos with their family, friends, and all over social media unless money is exchanged for silence.

However, this crime is part of a vicious cycle as the perpetrators do not stop once receiving money, they often threaten violence, and sometimes convince the victim that they are in legal trouble as a result of sharing underage photos of themselves with the criminal. Often the offender releases the sexually explicit material regardless of whether or not payment was received. Additionally, those committing sextortion schemes can have financial motives and/or derive sexual gratification from the materials they receive when threatening the victim.

Bradyn's Law creates much needed new penalties for the crime of sextortion, allows those who cause death by suicide as part of a sextortion scheme to be charged with felony murder, and makes a victim of sextortion or their family eligible for payment under the DOJ's crime victim compensation fund.



WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# Brent Jacobson

87TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

## Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 201 Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2025

Chairman Spiros and fellow members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, thank you for the opportunity to give testimony in favor of Assembly Bill 201, which we have named Bradyn's Law. This bill addresses sexual extortion, a serious and disturbing crime which has tragically impacted my district.

In March, a young student from my Assembly District named Bradyn Bohn had his life cut short after becoming a victim of sexual extortion. He was only 15 years old. Sexual extortion, or "sextortion", involves a criminal tricking or coercing a victim to provide sexually explicit material. Once they have it, they then use that material to blackmail or extort their victim. Bradyn's story is becoming frighteningly common. Last year, the Wisconsin Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force received 237 cybertips related to sextortion, a 55% increase compared to 2023. According to the FBI, between October 2021 and March 2023, there were over 13,000 reports of sextortion targeting minors. At least 20 of these attempts resulted in suicides.

Bradyn's Law gives our criminal justice system more tools to bring justice to the victims of sextortion and their families. It establishes sexual extortion as a crime in our statutes, and ensures that anyone charged for it will face up to 6 years in prison. If the victim is a minor, then this penalty increases to up to 10 years. Furthermore, in cases where sextortion leads to the death of the victim, Bradyn's Law allows prosecutors to charge perpetrators with felony murder. These measures will ensure that those who would attempt to harm or extort our children know to stay out of Wisconsin.

As a young parent myself, Bradyn's story hit especially close to home. Nothing scares me more than the thought of my child coming to harm, or being forced into an impossible choice by shameless thugs. This incident has left an indelible mark on our community, and us elected officials have a duty to prevent something like this from happening ever again.

Once again, thank you for receiving my testimony on this critical legislation. I ask that you join us to pass Bradyn's Law, and help ensure that no other community must ever face this kind of blow again.



April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025

Representative Spiros, Chair

Members of the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

**Testimony on 2025 Assembly Bill 201**

***Relating to: extortion, sexual extortion, and providing a penalty***

Thank you, Chairman Spiros and other members of the committee, for hearing my testimony on Assembly Bill 201 today. Over the last few years, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has reported an increase in the crime known as 'sextortion.' In these scenarios, adults will coerce kids and teenagers into sending explicit images of themselves online, and once they do, they then blackmail these kids by threatening to release the images unless they pay a fee.

As a parent, you never want to think that the unimaginable will happen to your child, but the rise in these cases is concerning. Between October 2021 and March 2023, the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security received over 13,00 reports of online financial sextortion of minors. 12,600 victims. Unfortunately, this led to at least 20 suicides.

Young men such as Gavin Guffrey in South Carolina, Jordan DeMay in Michigan, Elijah Heacock in Kentucky, and even Bradyn Bohn here in Wisconsin have all taken their own lives as a result of these crimes against them. Bradyn was a 15-year-old student in the D.C. Everest School District and was targeted in a case of financial sexual extortion. These kids are threatened, blackmailed, and victimized by these individuals, and some feel like there is unfortunately no way out.

This bill would create the crime of 'sextortion.' It is a Class I felony if you threaten an act of sextortion. It gets bumped up to a Class H felony if the victim follows through and meets the demands of the threat. It gets a penalty enhancer to a Class G felony if the defendant is previously convicted of a sexual violent offense. This bill would also allow for an individual to be prosecuted for felony murder if the person commits extortion or sexual extortion and causes the death of the victim. Additionally, the crime victim or the victim's family would be eligible for payment from the crime victim compensation fund if the victim is injured or dies as a result of the crime.

These protections need to be in place to better serve justice for these types of crimes against our children. Education and awareness are part of the solution, but it won't eliminate the problem completely. We need to stand up and protect our kids from instances like this. Thank you, and I will take any questions at this time.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jesse James'.

Senator Jesse James

23<sup>rd</sup> Senate District

[Sen.James@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Sen.James@legis.wisconsin.gov)