



PATRICK SNYDER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 85th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 233

Assembly Committee on Children and Families

May 7, 2025

Vice-Chairman Penterman and members of the Committee:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on AB 233. I hope many of you are already familiar with the important work done by Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) in Wisconsin. For those unfamiliar, CACs provide in multi-disciplinary approaches to investigating and substantiating child abuse and neglect.

CAC's work with law enforcement and are trained to interview child victims in a friendly manner and in a less traumatic environment than a police station. Law enforcement relies on CACs as a crucial partner in combating child abuse and neglect, sexual abuse of children, and child trafficking. CACs also provide victims services to affected children helping them on their long path of recovery.

This bill builds on the important work of Child Advocacy Centers by adding two new CACs to the current statutory program. It creates a new CAC in Sheboygan County and creates the Child Advocacy Centers of Wisconsin which would provide resources to all state CACs. Additionally, the bill changes the statutory name of several existing CACs that requested statutes be amended to match name changes the Centers have or wish to make.

Creating a new CAC in Sheboygan County and the central Chapter will go a long way to increasing the ability of CACs in our State to respond to and prevent child abuse and neglect.

I am open to any questions from the Committee.



May 7th, 2025

Representative Snyder, Chair

Senator Wanggaard, Vice-Chair

Representative Penterman, Vice-Chair

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

Members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families

Testimony on 2025 Senate Bill 232

Relating to: grants to child advocacy centers. (FE)

Thank you, Chairman Snyder, and members of both Senate and Assembly committees for listening to my testimony today. Nationwide, Child Advocacy Centers (CAC) serve over 370,000 children every year. For those of you not familiar with CACs, here is a snapshot on what services these centers provide. CACs serve children who are involved with cases of alleged abuse, neglect, and endangerment, by providing resources and support while also aiding in the investigations for these cases. In addition to their partnership with law enforcement, CACs educate legislators on the crucial services they provide and participate in task forces and state-wide committees to discuss issues related to child welfare and child abuse issues. CACs of WI also sponsor and provide statewide education on multi-disciplinary approaches to the investigation of child abuse, treatment of child abuse victims, and prosecution of criminal child abuse and neglect.

As a police officer, I have used my local CAC to help conduct forensic interviews for my personal cases. I often call them a "one-stop shop" because of all the services they provide for us officers. Conducting forensic interviews through the CAC creates a more welcoming environment for a child that has been through a traumatic experience. The information we collect from these interviews can be vital to our investigation as officers. We can get the child's statement recorded, our questions answered, and most of the testimony we need from the child all in one interview. This helps with not having the child relive their traumatic experiences over and over by conducting multiple interviews with multiple people. The centers work collaboratively with medical providers, social workers, counselors, victims advocates and other stakeholders who all have the best interest of our children in mind.

These centers are an incredible asset to Wisconsin, and thankfully we have a few more that opened in the state. The goal of this legislation is to officially recognize those new centers into statute, as well as clean up and update some of the statutory language for the other existing centers.

I applaud our child advocacy centers across our state who are our most valuable partners when it comes to holding those accountable who prey on our most vulnerable: our children. Thank you all again for your consideration of this bill.

Respectfully,

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

Senator Jesse James

23rd Senate District

Sen.James@legis.wisconsin.gov