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(FORM UPDATED: 08/11/2010)

**WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ...
PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS**

2005-06

(session year)

Assembly

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on ... Children and Families (AC-CF)

COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

- Committee Reports ... **CR**
- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
- Public Hearings ... **PH**

INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

- Appointments ... **Appt** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Clearinghouse Rules ... **CRule** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Hearing Records ... bills and resolutions (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
 - (**ab** = Assembly Bill) (**ar** = Assembly Resolution) (**ajr** = Assembly Joint Resolution)
 - (**sb** = Senate Bill) (**sr** = Senate Resolution) (**sjr** = Senate Joint Resolution)
- Miscellaneous ... **Misc**

* Contents organized for archiving by: Stefanie Rose (LRB) (May 2012)

May 4, 2006

Failed to pass pursuant to Senate Joint Resolution 1.

David Matzen
Committee Clerk



**ROCK COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT
P. O. BOX 1649, 3530 N. COUNTY TRUNK F
JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN 53547-1649**

November 9, 2005

Representative Steven Kestell
Room 17 West, State Capitol
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Re: Support for AB 754

Dear Representative Kestell:

At present, Wisconsin Works (W-2), Caretaker of a Minor Child (CMC) recipients are not required to participate in any activity in order to receive the W-2 payment benefit. Rock County supports Assembly Bill 754 requiring CMC recipients, who are custodial parents of an infant under twelve weeks of age, to participate in parenting skills training and employment preparation as a condition of receiving the monthly \$673 W-2 payment grant. Those modifications contained in AB 754 are consistent with the underlying philosophy and intent of the Wisconsin Works program, which is a welfare to work program.

The number of recipients in this W-2 payment tier in Rock County has now grown to over 50% of our caseload from approximately 30% just one year ago. The significant increase in CMC payment cases also appears to be a statewide trend. This rapid growth in caseload puts W-2 providers, such as Rock County, at financial risk.

The County is looking at a W-2 contract for the next two-year period that contains \$990,000 less than the current contract that expires at the end of 2005. Those funding cuts coupled with a growing client base that views monthly CMC payments as entitlement will make it increasingly difficult to manage the W-2 contract. AB 754 ties CMC benefits to participation in program activity. That participation includes parenting skills training and employment preparation for these young parents, resulting in more favorable outcomes for their children.

For the above reasons, we support AB 754. If you have any questions regarding our position or require further information, please contact Ms. Cindy Sutton, Economic Support Division Manager, at (608) 741-3491.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard K. Ott".

Richard K. Ott
Rock County Board Chair

cc: Representative Debi Towns
Mr. Craig Knutson, County Administrator
Ms. Lauri Steeber, Chair, Human Services Board
Ms. Charmian Klyve, Human Services Director
Ms. Cindy Sutton, Economic Support Division Manager



TESTIMONY TO ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

On

AB 754

by

Mary Thomas, MSW, LCSW

11/17/05

Thank you for this opportunity to present information for your consideration on AB 754. I am the Co-Chair of the Public Policy Committee of Milwaukee's Child Abuse Prevention Network and Vice Chair of the Public Policy Committee of the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council. I have worked with low-income families in social service agencies and medical settings for over 25 years.

It is useful to examine the proposed legislation to require mothers of newborns to participate in parenting skills training during the first month in which the parent receives a W-2 grant from two perspectives. First, from the perspective of the cost of such legislation, and then, from the perspective of precedent and customary practice in the workplace.

The net annualized fiscal impact of this legislation as presented in DWD's Fiscal Estimate Worksheet indicate is \$1,0593,987. This is a significant amount of money, particularly given the state's budget problems. And, spending this amount of money raises serious concerns about the legislature's commitment to restrain unnecessary spending.

It is necessary to challenge DWD's assumption for relying on families to provide child care at no cost to the state as well as the assumption that parents of newborns will have access to child care at the site of the classes. I am not aware of any sites that provide child care for infants who are less than 6 weeks old. Based on my experience, it is somewhat rare that child care sites provide care on a part-time basis, but instead charge full-time or close to full-time rates for such care.

More importantly, what is not included in DWD's fiscal analysis of the cost of this legislation is the potential increased costs to the state's Medical Assistance budget which includes health coverage for mothers and infants in this group through T-19, Badgercare, and Healthy Start. The post-partum period presents a number of health concerns for both mother and infant and requiring mothers of newborns to attend classes puts both mother and infant at increased risk for medical complications that could require additional medical services or hospitalizations.

According to the World Health Organization, "the health challenges faced by the newborn are impressive; their extent is greater than any other relatively short period of human life." For example, newborns can be susceptible to infections from the environment and symptoms of these infections can be non-specific. Because such symptoms can be non-specific, it is difficult to recognize that a significant problem can

be developing. A baby's condition can deteriorate rapidly, resulting in the need for hospitalization. Infants are also susceptible to hypothermia because an infant's body cools rapidly unless the baby is kept in a warm and dry environment. As you know, this can be particularly difficult in Wisconsin's climate. Interruptions in breastfeeding can lead to dehydration possibly resulting in the need for hospitalization.

The World Health Organization also notes risks to mothers in the post-partum period. There is risk for infection, particularly during the first weeks after delivery of a baby, and the risk of anemia continues to the 6th week after giving birth. These conditions can lead to increased need for medical intervention and therefore, increased medical costs.

When W-2 was designed, its emphasis on work was supported by recognizing certain precedents and customary practices in the work world. In the world of work, many employers allow 6 weeks for maternity leave. Additionally, Wisconsin's Family and Medical Leave Act allows 6 weeks of leave for births and adoptions. While Wisconsin gives employees the option to substitute accrued paid leave, such as sick time, for maternity leave, such paid leave is not available to many working women. The Legislative Audit Bureau's Audit of W-2 indicates that the W-2 agencies attributed increases in the use of W-2 cash grants to mothers of newborns to the lack of maternity benefits available from other sources. Requiring mothers of newborns in the W-2 program to attend parenting classes does nothing to address this issue and does not conform to customary practices in the work world.

In closing, I want to urge the committee to **consider the total fiscal impact of such legislation, particularly the potential for increased costs to the already seriously strained Medical Assistance budget.** It is irresponsible not to recognize these potential cost increases. And, when one of W-2's basic tenets states that the receipt of welfare should mirror the world of work, **it is illogical to establish conditions for parents that are contrary to the precedent and customary practices of the work world regarding maternity leave.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Thomas





November 17, 2005

Assembly Bill 754

- Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of Workforce Development's position on Assembly Bill 754. My name is JoAnna Richard and I am the Executive Assistant for the Department of Workforce Development, the agency responsible for administering the state's W-2 program.
- The Department appears today in opposition to AB 754.
- This bill not only has technical and fiscal issues associated with it, but it also has philosophical issues as well.

PHILOSOPHICAL OPPOSITION

- **Assumes "poor" people are poor parents.**
 - The bill assumes that all W-2 recipients who have a newborn need parenting skills training.
 - The bill does not take into consideration that many individuals who receive caretaker of a newborn payments, otherwise referred to as CMC payments, have other children and are very good parents.
 - Requiring CMC participants to attend parenting skills training assumes that because these parents are poor they are poor parents – an assumption with which we do not agree.
 - Requiring parenting training of parents who may not need it and a one-hour meeting with the Financial and Employment Planner (FEP) will not, in and of themselves, ensure that these mothers "benefit from the W-2 program itself."
- **The emphasis on workforce attachment in the bill is not strong enough.**
 - Wisconsin Works is a workforce attachment program. The current statutes related to custodial parents of infants does not align itself well with the goal of W-2 and workforce attachment
 - The solution to this problem is not mandatory parenting skills training and a one hour meeting with the FEP.
 - The solution to the problem is to provide real employment and training services that will allow these mothers to enter or re-enter the workforce. AB 754 does not do that.
 - It duplicates efforts that already exist. The Medicaid program has many opportunities for parents to access prenatal care programs as well as programs available after the birth of the child – Healthy Start, Woman, Infants and Children Supplemental Food Program and other Well-baby programs.
 - The purpose of the CMC placement is that during the 12-week period, it is expected that in addition to physically recuperating from the birth of their child and nurturing their infants during this critical period, new mothers will also find childcare and take other steps necessary in order to prepare to enter or re-enter the workforce.
 - Like Representative Towns, the Department recognizes that the CMC placement, as it exists today, does not provide mothers with the opportunity to utilize W-2's valuable workforce attachment training and services. That is why the Department will continue to work on a statutory change that would

extend the timeframe of the CMC placement from 12 weeks to six months, with a participation requirement at the 12th week. More than 26 states provide up to a year of coverage for this population and having Wisconsin move from 3 months to 6 months is a prudent and cost-saving measure.

- Extending the timeframe of the CMC placement would not only allow mothers time to nurture their infants during this critical period, it would also give mothers with barriers to employment more time to find child care and take other necessary steps to enter the workforce.
- Children need to be supported by strong successful families; this is one of the primary parts of Governor Doyle's *KidsFirst* initiative. Extending the CMC timeframe and requiring participation at 12 weeks is one way to give these struggling moms the opportunity to become self-sufficient and to give families the support they need to raise their kids in safe, stable households.
- Additionally, parenting should be voluntary and universal that is why the home visiting program that Governor Doyle proposed in his budget is a much better approach to good parenting skills enhancement for new parents.
- Furthermore, it has been almost 20 years since Wisconsin enacted its Family Medical Leave Act. Perhaps, policy leaders may wish to review this law to expand its coverage so more parents are able to have leave, both paid and unpaid, in order to be both good parents and good employees.

TECHNICAL OPPOSITIONS

- **The bill presents a number of technical issues:**

- There is no provision for good cause. A mother may not be able to participate in the parenting class in the first month or fail to appear for the FEP meeting in the last month, but may have a "good cause" reason for missing the activity. DWD believes unduly harsh.
- Child care must be provided in order to require participation in a W-2 activity, including parenting skills training. While newborn daycare is not readily available, even if it were available, expecting a mother to part with her one to four week old newborn is nonsensical.
- Because the average length of stay in a CMC is just under 65 days, by the time someone is required to participate, they will no longer be in the W-2 program or will only have a few weeks of eligibility left.
- The bill requires the *county department of human/social services* to arrange for or provide the parenting skills training. The county human/social service agency does not administer W-2 in all counties. Involving a county human/social service agency that does not provide W-2 services may add administrative complications
- The bill requires the *county department* to arrange the meeting with the FEP during the last 4 weeks in which she is eligible to receive a grant. Again, involving a county human/social service agency that does not provide W-2 services is cumbersome and adds administrative complications.

FISCAL OPPOSITION

- **Increased costs to the W-2 program without any offsetting budget allocations.** The Department has determined that this bill will cost over \$1.3 million to implement due to the cost of parenting skills training, child care, transportation, case management, changes to the CARES system, etc. These costs are outlined in the Department's fiscal estimate. No additional funds were allocated for this policy change.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



FACSIMILE COVER SHEET

FAX # (414) 272-0182

TO: Chairperson Kestell, Vice-Chairperson Vos, and
Committee Members Albers, Jeskewitz, Vukmir, Grigby,
Sinicki, and Seidel

Madison, WI

DESTINATION FAX #: 608.282.3627, 608.282.3663, 608.282.3650,
608.282.3624, 608.266.9180, 608.282.3618,
608.282.3620 & 608.266.0654

FROM: American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin

DATE: 11/17/05

TOTAL PAGES (Including cover page): 3

If you do not receive all of the pages or have a problem with the transmission,
please contact Angie at 414.272.4032, ext. 11.

MESSAGE: Re: AB 754



November 17, 2005

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Chairperson Kestell, Vice-Chairperson Vos, and

Committee Members Albers, Jeskewitz, Vukmir, Grigsby, Sinicki, and Seidel
Madison, WI

TRANSMITTED VIA FACSIMILE ONLY

RE: AB 754

Dear Chairperson Kestell, Vice-Chairperson Vos, and Committee Members Albers, Jeskewitz, Vukmir, Grigsby, Sinicki, and Seidel:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin is writing to express serious concern regarding AB 754, which would impose mandatory activities on parents of newborns - and would *permanently* disqualify families unable to comply with such requirements.

We agree that W-2 agencies should be required to *offer* parenting classes to, and discuss supportive services with, parents of newborn infants. AB 754, however, goes too far. By forcing all parents to attend such classes, the proposed statute presupposes a lack of competency of new mothers simply by virtue of their being poor enough to require W-2. This is the case regardless of the parent's background, and made without any individualized assessment of whether such classes are necessary or appropriate.

In addition, by requiring that parents attend classes as early as the first month after a child's birth, the proposed legislation disregards the actual needs and circumstances of parents of newborns. In the first month after a birth, mothers are routinely recovering from the physical ordeal of childbirth, and waking frequently at night to care for infants, realities that often make it difficult for them to follow scheduled daytime activities. Limited transportation options, weather conditions, the need to care for other children who may be at home, and similar problems may also preclude a parent from participating in mandated classes. While the proposal says that the W-2 agency "may" allow a parent to participate at a later date, this opens up the

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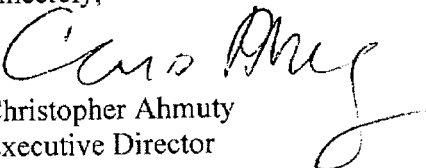
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prospect of arbitrary and unreasonable applications of the law and improper impositions of penalties on parents of newborns, problems identified in several past Legislative Audit Bureau reports.

The proposed legislation also unreasonably imposes excessive penalties. A parent unable to attend the mandated classes, or who misses an appointment to discuss W-2 and related services during these early months, would not only be disqualified from receiving W-2 Caretaker of a Newborn infant benefits during that child's infancy, it would disqualify the parent from Caretaker of a Newborn grants for any subsequent children that parent might have - whenever those children are born.

The burdens of this bill will fall too heavily on low income parents and their newborn infants. We therefore oppose it.

Sincerely,


Christopher Ahmuty
Executive Director






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MADISON, WI 53703
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families

FROM: Sarah Diedrick-Kasdorf, Senior Legislative Associate 

DATE: November 17, 2005

SUBJECT: Opposition to Assembly Bill 754

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) opposes Assembly Bill 754 relating to requiring a Wisconsin Works (W-2) grant recipient who is a custodial parent with an infant to attend parenting skills training and to meet with a financial and employment planner.

Section 3 of the bill specifies that during the first month in which an individual receives a CMC grant, the individual shall participate in parenting skills training provided or arranged by the county department of the county in which the individual resides. This is clearly an unfunded mandate on county government. Under the bill, there is no requirement that the W-2 agency pay for the training or county staff time involved with arranging for the training. Beginning in 2006, 26 counties are not even W-2 providers. This requirement places an undue burden on county human and social services departments across the state whose budgets were just recently adopted based on current state-mandated programs.

In addition, the bill requires individuals to meet with a financial and employment planner at any time during the last four weeks in which he or she is eligible to receive CMC grants. For the counties that are operating W-2, contract amounts are insufficient to meet current program requirements. There is not funding available to meet the additional requirements contained in Assembly Bill 754.

Until the requirements contained in this bill are adequately funded, WCA will oppose this legislation.

Thank you for considering our comments.



November 17, 2005

Rep. Debi Towns Testimony to Committee on Children and Families on
Assembly Bill 754

Thank you for this opportunity to address the Committee on Children and Families, Mr. Chair and members.

As a relatively new program, implemented in September of 1997, the W-2 program has been instrumental in helping participants achieve economic self-sufficiency through employment. This program also recognizes that there is value in encouraging a bonding time between a new parent and a newborn. As a result, the Wisconsin Works (W2) program allows for an eligible participant who is a new parent to receive a monthly stipend of \$673 for up to three months. This is called the Caretaker of Newborn Infant program (CNI).

Even though this program is part of the W-2 program, there are no requirements to have been an active participant of W-2 for any period of time prior to collecting the CNI payments. Furthermore, following the twelve weeks, CNI recipients are not required to continue in the W-2 program. As a result, counties are seeing many young women apply for eligibility immediately prior to delivery, collect the three monthly payments, and then never show up to participate in the valuable part of the W-2 program – the work component.

Furthermore, if they become pregnant again, they can re-apply for eligibility and collect the monthly grant a second time -- or even a third time -- and never participate in any W-2 employment planning, training or work experience.

My county administrators have brought the concern forward that an increasing number of young women misuse the program in this way. Last

November 17, 2005

April, an audit of W-2 programs, excluding Milwaukee County, showed how the CNI caseload increased three-fold from 265 in June of 1998 to 818 in June of 2004. According to the report approximately 50% of these CNI grant recipients were never placed by W-2 and left the program following the three months. While the W-2 agencies are supportive in helping these individuals get established as new parents, I contend that the most valuable part and the main purpose of the program is not being utilized by 50% of CNI recipients. That part is completing the W-2 work program.

To address these concerns, I drafted this bill. Specifically, AB 754 requires that a person who becomes eligible for a CNI grant would be required to participate in a parenting skills training program during the first month of receiving the grant. Participation in the training would be provided or arranged by the Wisconsin Works agency provider. Many feel that this additional counseling contact will be beneficial both to the parent by fostering healthy parenting skills and to the program by encouraging active participation.


AB 754 also requires that during the final four weeks of eligibility for CNI payments, the participant must meet with a financial and employment planner. The purpose of this meeting is to help inform the parent about employment, financial planning, discuss child care arrangements, and provide information on the food stamp program and on other food and nutrition programs. It is our hope that this additional requirement will help successfully transition these individuals from the CNI program back into the W-2 work program.

Hopefully, these modifications to the program will help keep it focused on its original purpose – to achieve economic self-sufficiency through employment.





TO: Assembly Committee on Children and Families

FROM: Bob Andersen 

RE: AB 754, Relating to: requiring a Wisconsin Works grant recipient who is a custodial parent with an infant to attend parenting skills training and to meet with a financial and employment planner

DATE: November 17, 2005

1. **The Principle Concern With This Bill is That it Threatens to Undermine the Vitally Important Nurturing of Newborns of W-2 Participants.**

The three month exemption from activities for parents with newborns is created for a reason. That is to give the parents relief from activities that could harm the vitally important nurturing of a newborn during this very critical stage. In the words of the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, in Paper #854 for the 2005 Budget Bill – Caretaker of a Newborn Infant (DWD -- Economic Support and Child Care –

There is much research on early child development and the effects of day care versus home care. Some research suggests that, for infants under the age of one year, separation from their mother for more than 20 hours per week may disrupt the development of attachment, and put some children at risk for social and emotional problems. In addition, some research indicates that warm, nurturing environments, with consistent, loving caretakers are needed for healthy brain development in children's early stages.

Now, the bill may not involve separation between the parent and the child for that length of time, but who knows how long it will be? The bill provides that the parent is to participate in parenting skills training provided or arranged by the county department *during the first month* the caretaker receives a grant. There is no indication on how extensive this training is to be. Or on how many different days. It appears to be at the discretion of the county. It is understandable that the goal is to get to the parent as soon as possible, but those first months are easily the most critical in the nurturing of the child.

2. **Caretaker of a Newborn Infant Program (CNI) Was Created to Mirror “Real Life,” and the Legislature Used the Requirements of the State’s Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) as Its Guide – Nowhere in Either “Real Life Practices ” Nor in the FMLA is there a Requirement for Parenting Skills Training**

The Legislative Fiscal Bureau paper referred to above says

The family and medical leave act (FMLA) requires certain employers to provide 12 weeks of unpaid leave to care for a family member, for their own physical/mental health care, and after the birth or adoption of a child.

Wisconsin's current exemption of 12 weeks is based on the FMLA provisions, and on the assumption that most employees get no more than 12 weeks of unpaid leave after the birth or adoption of a child.

It is the widely acknowledged that the philosophy behind current law is, and always has been since the inception of W-2, that the legislature desires to have the CNI program mirror the current practice and experience that thousands of families have in the private workplace. This has been referred to as “Real Life” experience. There has been much dispute over what is the *real life* experience for most families in Wisconsin, with many advocates claiming that many mothers in the private sector take more than 3 months away from their jobs in order to nurture their newborn children. Advocates also point to the number of other states that do not practice the severe restrictions that exist in Wisconsin – a point elaborated on below.

Notwithstanding this objection on the part of advocates for low income people, many attempts over the years to expand the current 3 month work exemption to 6 months or to a year have been repeatedly rejected by the legislature. The *objection has always been that the legislature desires that the law reflect what is the general experience for parents in our society.*

AB 754 is inconsistent with that long held philosophy, because parents in society in general do not take parenting skills training, nor are they required to. Nor does the state FMLA Act (Section 103.10 of the statutes) require parents to take parenting skills training.

3. **Federal Law Allows States to Exempt Parents of Newborns for One Year – 23 States Exempt Parents for One Year; 5 States Exempt Parents for Even Longer than One Year; 4 States Exempt Parents for Periods Between 3 Months and One Year.**

23 states and the District of Columbia provided exemptions from TANF work participation requirements for parents caring for infants up to the age of one year. Five states provided exemptions to parents caring for children older than one

year. Four states provided exemptions to parents with children ranging somewhere between three months to one year. Thirteen states, including Wisconsin, provided exemptions for parents of infants who are up to three months old. Five states provided no automatic exemptions.

This is a testament as to how other states regard the importance of those first several months in a baby's life in being nurtured by the parents. Wisconsin is definitely in the minority in its concern for the TANF child's early development.

Similarly, federal law does not require states to require participants to perform 30 hours of work per week until the child has reached the age of 6 years of age. States are free to impose part time work requirements on parents until the children reach that age. Where does Wisconsin stand on this? After 3 months, the parent is required to perform 30 hours of work per week in Wisconsin.

4. **The Bill Assumes that All W-2 Parents Do not Know How to Parent a Child – Even Though Some W-2 Participants Will Already Have Raised Other Children.**

Under AB 754, all W-2 parents are treated alike. No matter how many children the parent has, the parent is required to take the parenting skills training, without any prior assessment as to whether this training is appropriate or necessary. In many circumstances, this requirement could be wasteful and offensive.

5. **Teen Parents, Who Would Presumably Benefit Most from Parenting Skills Training, are Not Included by the Bill, Because Teen Parents are Not Eligible for W-2.**

In the one area where one might think it may be useful to have such parenting skills training – teen parents – unfortunately, there will be none, because teen parents are not eligible for W-2 and are therefore not eligible for these services. No one under age 18 can receive W-2 in Wisconsin.

6. **If Protection for Children at Risk is the Goal, the Legislature Should Adopt the Proposal for a Home Visiting Program for All Low Income Parents Which was Rejected in the Budget Bill.**

Instead of categorically including all parents in the requirements of this bill – or excluding them, as is the case for teen parents – if the legislature is concerned about the health and development of babies it should adopt the approach that was recommended in the budget bill. The budget bill funded a home visiting program that would provide outreach to *all* young mothers to ascertain whether they needed help and that would provide services to connect them with the health care programs that exist.

According to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau,

Research suggests that some home visiting programs that combine home visitation services for the families most at risk of child maltreatment with less intensive services and referrals to other programs for all families of infants and young children have been successful in reducing the incidence of child abuse and neglect among families that received these services. These programs have the following characteristics: (a) are universal and serve all families, regardless of level of need, close to the birth of a child; (b) connect all families to community resources that match their particular needs; and © provide intensive support to those families most in need.

7. **Child Care Will Have to be Provided to Enable Parents to Attend the Parenting Skills Training, Because Federal Law Prohibits Sanctions Where Child Care is Unavailable.**

Under TANF, there is a prohibition against a state imposing a grant reduction or termination against a family when the parent cannot participate in a required activity due to lack of needed child care. Without the prospect of a sanction, a provision like the one contained in AB 754 would be unenforceable. The provision of child care for this population will be an increased cost to the state.





University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Center for Economic Development

Assembly Committee on Children and Families
Testimony on Assembly Bill 754
Pamela Fendt, policy analyst
November 17, 2005

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Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to testify on this policy proposal.

The purpose of AB 754 is to impose participation requirements on mothers of newborns receiving W-2 financial assistance. There are a number of issues and problems that the Committee should consider before voting.

When W-2 was established in 1997, there was an intent to provide a paid maternity leave of 12 weeks, in recognition that many of the jobs that mothers leaving welfare would obtain didn't pay enough to allow them to save 6-12 weeks of living expenses or offer paid maternity leave.

Attached to this testimony is a copy of a publication issued by DWD in 1997. You'll see on page 4 that the 12 weeks of W-2 payments for the mothers with newborn children is in fact listed as "12 Weeks Paid Maternity Leave."

Federal TANF parameters allow voluntary work participation for 12 months after the birth of a child, but Wisconsin has opted for a stricter program model. According to the US Census, only one-third of mothers of babies under 1 year of age work full-time.

Wisconsin's policy is not in keeping with the norm in terms of welfare policy or the real world of work, and this proposal would take us in an even more punitive direction.

The W-2 Manual boasts of the support this benefit offers to fragile families, saying it is modeled after Family Medical Leave Act "with the exception that the W-2 placement offers income support during the first 12 weeks of the child's life." Under this bill all income support would be denied to a family if the mother didn't attend a parenting class.

Until now, participation in activities in the 12 weeks after the baby's birth was strictly voluntary. In establishing mandatory participation requirements, it appears that the next step would be sanctioning parents for non-participation. Before a W-2 Agency can reduce a W-2 grant, however, they have to be sure that there wasn't a good cause reason. For families of newborns, there are a myriad of reasons that could constitute good cause. This bill would create numerous administrative problems for W-2 agencies.

In addition this will create a new service cost for the W-2 agencies. At a time of tight budgets, a priority should be placed on expenditures that can be most shown to benefit poor families with children.

This action would be a major policy shift away from the supported work approach to welfare reform promoted by Governor Thompson in establishing W-2. What is presented in this bill seems to be cost-control measures dressed up as concern for the families in the program. I don't believe it would improve program outcomes.

I would be happy to answer any questions Committee members might have.

CHILD SUPPORT

Under W-2, in most cases, full child support payments are passed on to the parent. This represents a significant change from the previous system where parents were permitted to keep only \$50, and the rest went to government to offset the cost of providing AFDC payments. This will reverse the disincentive to cooperate with child support authorities to pursue support and make the W-2 experience more like that of the real world. Wisconsin is the only state in the nation making this commitment.



If parents need help establishing paternity and securing child support, W-2 will link these parents to the child support enforcement system and help them pursue that additional support. W-2 has two programs that serve noncustodial parents to increase the number of child support payments. The first program is a voluntary case management service to noncustodial parents of W-2 children. W-2 case managers assist these noncustodial parents in their effort to find employment, which will lead to increased ability to pay support.

The second program is **Children First**, a court-ordered initiative geared toward noncustodial parents who are unemployed and delinquent in their child support payments. These noncustodial parents are court-ordered into the program with three options: 1) pay their child support payment for three months, 2) spend 16 weeks in an unpaid work assignment (with case management) to gain the experience needed to hold a job, or 3) go to jail. Most parents comply immediately with child support orders and often become more involved in the lives of their children as well. Children First has been operating successfully in a growing number of counties since 1990. The latest evaluation of Children First showed increased collections, up an average of 118 percent or \$242/month; a 93 percent increase in the number of people paying child support; and a 123 percent increase in the number of noncustodial parents with jobs.

12 WEEKS PAID MATERNITY LEAVE

W-2 allows a single parent to receive a payment without meeting a work requirement until his/her child reaches 12 weeks of age — this time period is equal to the unpaid leave provided under the Federal Family and Medical Leave Law. At this point, s/he is expected to join the workforce, just like most other parents of young children. Of mothers with children under three, national data show that 42 percent of single mothers and 62 percent of married mothers work either full- or part-time.



MAKING IT AS A MOM WORKING PART-TIME

Many mothers can work part-time in an unsubsidized job and still take home more money than they would in a W-2 work program, and more than they did under the old AFDC program. Child support payments make the financial position even stronger. For example, a mother of two earning \$6.00 per hour (average starting wage for people leaving welfare) working 22 hours per week takes home \$13,200 per year after taxes, including food stamps and EIC, compared to \$11,920 in a W-2 Community Service Job or \$9,504 under the former AFDC system.



TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO ASSEMBLY BILL 754

Date?

My name is Anne L. De Leo. I serve as the co-chair of the W-2 Monitoring Task Force of the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors. The Monitoring Task Force was appointed in 1998. Our members represent organizations and individuals who closely follow the administration of the W-2 program. We have reviewed Assembly Bill 754 and urge you not to support it because it overturns one of the basic features in the original design of the W-2 program.

Assembly Bill 754 is not a small change to the program. It adds eligibility requirements for the mothers of newborns designed to make it harder for these mothers to receive the three checks they now receive under the W-2 Maternity Care program. Under AB 754, mothers of newborns will face two stumbling blocks as they adjust to life with their infants—mandatory parenting skills training during the first four weeks and a meeting with a W-2 Financial and Employability Planner during the last four weeks. Failure to meet either of these new requirements will stop the maternity care checks.

When the W-2 program was originally unveiled in 1997, Governor Thompson and the other designers of the program highlighted W-2's 12-week maternity leave feature as Wisconsin's Family and Medical Leave program for new mothers. I've attached a copy of a page from a 1997 DWD publication that describes the 12 weeks of paid maternity leave under the W-2 program. This official description explained:

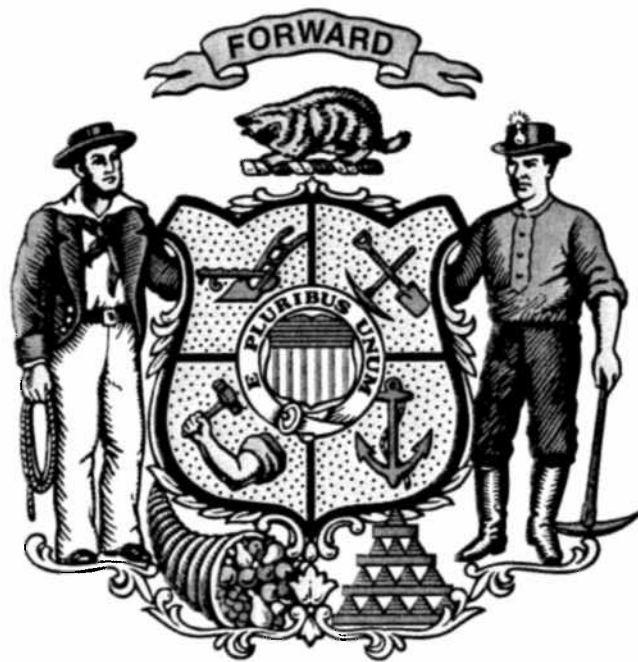
"W-2 allows a single parent to receive a payment without meeting a work requirement until his/her child reaches 12 weeks of age – this time period is equal to the unpaid leave provided under the Federal Family and Medical Leave Law."

The old AFDC program had allowed one year before a new mother was required to participate in work activities. Governor Thompson assured low-income Wisconsin residents that even though AFDC would be gone, new mothers would at least have 12 weeks of income before being required to work.

AB 754 would repeal Governor Thompson's promise of paid family leave. Why? Because W-2 agencies report that some employers are referring their pregnant employees to the W-2 program instead of offering them employer-paid maternity leave.

Lack of employer-paid maternity leave is certainly an important issue that affects both low-income and middle class women. But Assembly Bill 754 offers no new policy to address this issue. It simply singles out the poorest of these new mothers and takes away their paid leave.

I suppose the drafters of AB 754 think this bill might help keep the W-2 ship from sinking in the sea of increasing costs, but do you really think that new mothers and infants should be the first to be pushed overboard?



RESOLUTION
ROCK COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Charmian Klyve
INITIATED BY



Judy Steinbicer
DRAFTED BY

Human Service Board
SUBMITTED BY

October 21, 2005
DATE DRAFTED

TITLE

TO SUPPORT AB 754

1 WHEREAS, the 2005-2006 Legislature will be considering AB 754 a bill to renumber and
2 amend 49.148 (1m) (b); 49.148 (1m) (a); and to create 49.148 (1m) (bm) of the statutes; to
3 require Wisconsin Works grant recipients who are custodial parents with an infant to attend
4 parenting skills training and to meet with a financial and employment planner; a condition of
5 receiving the \$673 monthly grant; and
6

7 WHEREAS, currently custodial parents with an infant or (W-2 CMCs) represent up to 50% of
8 our W-2 payment cases; and
9

10 WHEREAS, under current law there is no requirement to participate in the Wisconsin Works
11 program making the \$673 monthly payment basically an entitlement program funded out of a
12 sum certain W-2 allocation; and
13

14 WHEREAS, Rock County supports this amendment to add the parenting requirement and to
15 meet with a financial and employment planner to receive the full three months of payment
16 benefits, which is the underlying principle of the Wisconsin Works program philosophy; and
17

18 NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Rock County Board of Supervisors, duly
19 assembled this 17th day of November, 2005, does hereby support AB 754; and
20

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the County Clerk be authorized and directed to furnish a
22 copy of this resolution to the Wisconsin Counties Association and to the Rock County
23 legislative delegation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Human Services Board

Absent
Lauri Steeber, Chair

Sally Jean Weaver Landers
Sally Jean Weaver-Landers, Vice-Chair

Absent
Adam Peer

Abstain
Marshall Bown

Neil Deupree
Neil Deupree

Absent
Brian Knudson

Absent
Susan Masterson

Minnie Murry
Minnie Murry

Fred Yoss
Fred Yoss

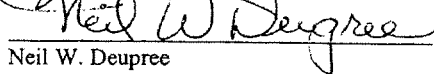
05-11D-368

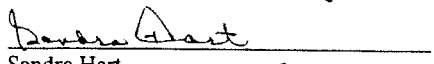
COUNTY BOARD STAFF COMMITTEE

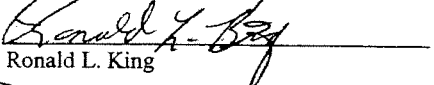

Richard K. Ott, Chair

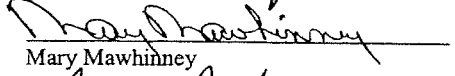

J. Russell Podzilni, Vice Chair

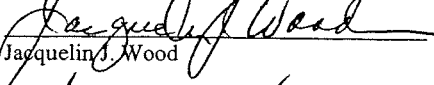

Betty Jo Bussie

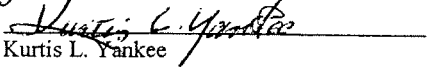

Neil W. Deupree


Sandra Hart


Ronald L. King

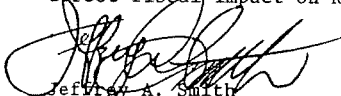

Mary Mawhinney


Jacquelin J. Wood


Kurtis L. Yankee

FISCAL NOTE:

This resolution addresses a legislative policy issue and has no direct fiscal impact on Rock County operations in and by itself.


Jeffrey A. Smith
Finance Director


ADMINISTRATIVE NOTE:

Recommended.


Craig Knutson
County Administrator

LEGAL NOTE:

The County Board is authorized to take this action pursuant to sec. 59.51, Wis. Stats.


Thomas A. Schroeder
Corporation Counsel

Executive Summary

Resolution to Support AB-754

Representative Debra Towns met with staff from Rock County Human Services after hearing the 2006 preliminary budget presentation this summer to discuss the concerns that were raised regarding the custodial parent with an infant (CMC) benefit under the Wisconsin Works Contract. Representative Towns then had AB-754 drafted requiring Wisconsin Works grant recipients who are custodial parents with an infant to attend parenting skills training and to meet with a financial and employment planner; as a condition of receiving the \$673 monthly grant.

Currently custodial parents with an infant or (W-2 CMCs) represent up to 50% of our W-2 payment cases. Under current law there is no requirement to participate in the Wisconsin Works program making the \$673 monthly payment basically an entitlement program funded out of a sum certain W-2 allocation. Rock County supports this amendment to add the parenting requirement and to meet with a financial and employment planner to receive the \$673 monthly benefit, which is the underlying principal of the rest of the Wisconsin Works program philosophy.



Rock County Wisconsin Works (W-2) Study Custodial Parent of an Infant (CMC)

Rock County used State report C785-Individual Clocks Report for Rock County to identify CMC cases open during the month of January 2005. We then reviewed each of the 76 cases that appeared on the report to find the following:

Of the 76 cases reviewed:

- **25% of the individual had participated in W-2 prior to the CMC placement**
- **5% of the individuals remained in W-2 after the CMC placement ended**
- **23% of these individuals received CMC benefits more than once (2.6% had received CMC on 3 separate occasions**
- **63% of the individuals who received CMC had not been employed within 30 days prior to placement in CMC nor were they employed within 30 days after CMC ended**



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Towns proposes W-2 change

AB 754

(Published Friday, November 18, 2005 11:30:17 AM CST)

By Jay Webster
Capitol News Service

MADISON, Wis. -- A bill authored by Rep. Debi Towns adding requirements for young mothers to the Wisconsin Works program had its supporters from Rock County during a hearing before the Assembly Committee of Children and Families on Thursday.

But the bill also encountered firm opposition from Milwaukee representatives.

Current law allows parents whose children are 12 weeks or younger and who are eligible for Caretaker of a Minor Child grants in the Wisconsin Works, or W-2 program, to receive \$673 in monthly grants. The participant does not have to work in a W-2 employment position during that time.

Towns, R-Janesville, said the nonwork provisions brought about her legislation.

Towns' bill, AB 754, adds additional requirements for eligibility for the monthly grant programs. Parents must participate in a parenting skills course as provided or arranged by the county human services department if they want to be eligible for the monthly grants. Parents will forfeit any grant money if they do not participate in parental training.

Charmian Klyve, Rock County human services director, said the bill brings about changes to a W-2 system that currently has recipients viewing their monthly grants only as an entitlement rather than a part of the philosophy W-2 has as a welfare-to-work program.

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"We frequently find that the caretaker population only comes in for three months of benefits and do not continue in any kind of employment training," she said.

"Many feel that this additional counseling contact will be beneficial both to the parent by fostering healthy parenting skills and to the W-2 program by encouraging active participation," Towns said.

In a letter to Rep. Steve Kestell, R-Elkhart Lake, chair of the Assembly Children and Families Committee, Rock County Board Chairman Richard Ott said Towns' bill reiterates the philosophy of the W-2 program as a means to aid future employment.

"Those modifications contained in AB 754 are consistent with the underlying philosophy and intent of the Wisconsin Works program, which is a welfare-to-work program," Ott said.

Also in his letter, Ott wrote that the caretaker population in Rock County has increased to 50 percent of Rock County cases, up from 30 percent a year ago.

Rock County also expects a W-2 contract over the next two years that is \$990,000 less than the current contract, which expires at the end of the year.

"Those funding cuts coupled with a growing client base that views monthly caretaker payments as entitlement will make it increasingly difficult to manage the W-2 contract," Ott said.

Pamela Fendt, a policy analyst for the Center for Economic Development at UW-Milwaukee, said in written remarks that the bill "would create numerous administrative problems for W-2 agencies" and creates additional costs for new programs in W-2 agencies.

Mary Thomas, co-chair of the Public Policy of Milwaukee's Child Abuse Prevention Network, said that health care costs could increase potentially as well if mothers and newborns are separated for parenting classes.

"Interruptions in breastfeeding can lead to dehydration, possibly resulting in the need for hospitalization," she said.

Anne L. De Leo, co-chair of the W-2 Monitoring Task Force of the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors, said in her testimony that Towns' bill does not address the real issue of lack of paid maternity leave among employers, an issue that affects both low- and middle-income women.

"It simply singles out the poorest of these new mothers and takes away their paid leave," she said.

Sharon Oldenburg, Rock County economic support supervisor, said parenting classes would not have a required format under the bill and could be done in hospitals, through county health

departments, schools and possibly at home by W-2 agencies, depending on different circumstances.

"It does not have to be cookie-cutter," Oldenburg said. "We can individualize it for each family."


Cindy Sutton, economic support services manager for Rock County, said the bill's passage would mean new opportunities for caretaker recipients and W-2 program providers.

"We are hoping we can offer the parenting skills and the employment skills that are needed to insure the safety involved in the care of children and to provide the skills and education that they need to provide for their children."

The bill awaits executive action from the committee.

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