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# PATRICK SNYDER

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

## Testimony in Support of AB 785: Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Grants

Thank you Chairman Kitchens and fellow members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 785. This proposal, similar to many before you today, is a product of the bipartisan Speaker's Task Force on Foster Care, which I've had the honor of leading over the past several months with my colleague and co-chair, Representative Steve Doyle.

In 2016, Child Protective Services (CPS) agencies across Wisconsin received a total of 78,382 alleged child maltreatment referrals. That number is up 2.5% from 76,442 in the previous year. Of these referrals, 3,322 children were removed from their homes and placed into out-of-home care in order to ensure their safety. The numbers are troubling and the statistics are overwhelming. And Wisconsin is not alone in this fight. Out-of-home placements have been on the rise since 2012, and this is a trend that is taking over nationally.

As the numbers demonstrate, child abuse can happen in any community, anywhere. It is not a "not in my neighborhood" situation, and we most certainly cannot take that approach. That is why an investment in programs that strengthen our families, protect our children, and ultimately prevent child abuse and neglect are critical. Keeping children in the comfort of their own homes and eliminating the risk of long-lasting negative effects should be our primary goal as we look at ways to improve our child welfare system.

The proposal before you today allocates additional funding to invest in prevention programs across our state. Fortunately, there are many evidence-based programs that are already out there working to prevent child abuse and neglect and keep children in their homes. There are also counties that are creative, and extremely knowledgeable about the needs of their communities and are beginning to think-up their own solutions. That is why this proposal gives the counties, non-profit organizations, and tribes the flexibility to invest in existing programs, or start-up new programs that they believe will fit the needs of their communities.

The program would be administered by the Department of Children and Families and be funded through federal TANF dollars. Receipt of the grant would be conditional on a 9.89% local match from counties, with the intention that multiple counties could apply together and various community organizations could help fund the match. DCF will be required to evaluate the grant program biennially and submit a report to the appropriate standing committees.

Before you today are many county human service staff and non-profit advocates to discuss the benefits additional funding will have on their communities. These professionals know first-hand the types of programs that will work in their area, and I am happy to advocate for more opportunities to expand and create them.

Thank you for your time and consideration on not only Assembly Bill 785, but on all of the Foster Forward proposals before you today. At this time, I am happy to take any questions.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
**STEVE DOYLE**

WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY

94<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

TO: Chairman Kitchens and Members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families

FROM: Rep. Steve Doyle

DATE: January 17, 2018

SUBJECT: Testimony in support of AB 785

Thank you for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 785, relating to Prevention Innovation Grants. This bill is very special to me because the idea for these grants came from our La Crosse County Human Services Director Jason Witt and the Wisconsin Association for Families and Children's Agencies who will be testifying later.

One of the things that we heard over and over during the public hearings for the Speaker's Task Force on Foster Care was the need for prevention services. If we support families and provide them with the resources they need to prevent child abuse and neglect, we can begin to take some of the burden off of our child welfare system. Unfortunately when budgets are tight, prevention services are often the first thing to be cut. But for me, this is the best place to invest our resources because the rewards later will definitely outweigh the cost.

We also saw during our hearings that our county human services departments are some of the most creative, hardworking people anywhere in Wisconsin. They are always looking for innovative ideas. In La Crosse County, we have had a lot of success with a unique prevention program known as the La Crosse Area Family Collaborative. It is built around imbedding social workers in communities most at risk for child abuse and neglect and connecting with children and their families through existing networks like school and church. We've had a lot of success already with this program but I'm sure you can all understand that what works in La Crosse might not work in different parts of the state. What we want to do with this grant program is allow counties the ability to try new or existing prevention programs that they believe fit the unique circumstances of their community.

AB 785 would create a matching grant program that counties, non-profits, and tribes could apply for and use to expand existing prevention programs or create new programs designed to keep families out of the child welfare system. The grant program would give counties the flexibility to invest in Home Visiting Programs, Community Response Programs, imbedded social worker programs like we have in La Crosse or a new program based on successes elsewhere. There would be a 9.89% local match requirement with the intention that multiple counties and/or community organizations would come together to fund the match.

Keeping children safe in their homes and providing struggling parents with the supports they need early is one of the best things we can do for our child welfare system right now. By preventing the trauma caused by putting a child in foster care and disrupting a family, we can help break often generational cycles of abuse and neglect and help ensure that our children grow up in the best family possible.

This bill is by far the biggest investment in the entire Foster Forward package and after today's testimony I hope you will see why. At this time I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



201 East Washington Avenue, Room G200  
P.O. Box 8916  
Madison, WI 53708-8916  
Telephone: 608-422-7000  
Fax: 608-261-6972

Governor Scott Walker  
Secretary Eloise Anderson

Secretary's Office

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Date: January 17, 2018  
To: Members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families  
From: Lonna Morouney, Legislative Liaison  
Fredri Bove, Administrator, Division of Safety and Permanence  
Re: 2017 Assembly Bill 785

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Chairman Kitchens and Members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 785, one of the recommended legislative proposals from the Speaker's Task Force on Foster Care. My name is Lonna Morouney and I am the Legislative Liaison for the Department of Children and Families. I am accompanied by Fredri Bove, Administrator for the Division of Safety and Permanence for the Department.

Assembly Bill 785 creates a new matching grant program funded with \$500,000 of federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) dollars administered by DCF for the purpose of child abuse and neglect prevention services. Counties, nonprofit organizations and Tribes are eligible to apply for the grants which are intended to encourage innovative practices for reducing contact with the child welfare system and preventing placement of children in Out-of-Home Care. Under the bill, DCF is required to submit a report about the effectiveness of the program to the legislative standing committees by June 30, 2021 and every other year thereafter.

Recent scientific research shows that abuse and neglect and other adverse childhood experiences impair the healthy development of a child's brain, resulting in adverse physical health, behavioral health, and social-emotional outcomes in both the short and long-term. Preventing childhood maltreatment from occurring helps place children on a positive trajectory to be healthy and successful as children and adults. This bill expands the resources available to invest in the important area of prevention.

The Department sincerely thanks the authors of the bill, and the entire Task Force for their commitment to improving the foster care system in Wisconsin.

We are pleased to answer any questions you may have.

**TO:** Assembly Committee on Children & Families  
**FROM:** Kristin Kopcha, Director of Family Preservation & Support, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin  
**DATE:** Wednesday, January 17, 2018  
**RE:** Support for AB 785—Funding for child abuse and neglect prevention grants

Good morning, Chairman Kitchens and members of the committee. My name is Kristin Kopcha and I am the Director of Family Preservation & Support at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to submit testimony in support of AB 785 which provides funding for child abuse and neglect prevention grants. I want to thank the Speaker's Task Force on Foster Care for holding public hearings last year and the authors, Representative Snyder and Senator Petrowski, for sponsoring this legislation.

As you know, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin (Children's Hospital) serves children and families in every county across the state. We have inpatient hospitals in Milwaukee and the Fox Valley. We care for every part of a child's health, from critical care at one of our hospitals, to routine checkups in our primary care clinics. Children's Hospital is the largest not-for-profit, community-based agency serving children and families in the state, providing community services to more than 15,000 children and families annually. Children's Hospital operates seven of the 15 child advocacy centers (CACs) across the state and in partnership with the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services, we are responsible for the ongoing case management of approximately half of the youth and families involved in out-of-home care in Milwaukee County. We recruit, license and support foster and adoptive parents, as well as match and place children in safe, loving homes. The majority of children and youth have some degree of physical, behavioral and emotional needs stemming from the trauma they have experienced in their lives.

Children's Hospital provides home visiting services across the state to support at-risk parents, during a pregnancy through the first five years of the child's life, to reduce the likelihood of child maltreatment and to strengthen family functioning. Visits occur in the home on a frequent basis to provide education on topics like pregnancy, reproductive health, child development, safe sleep and offer guidance on navigating the often complex food and child assistance systems. Community response and family support services are provided to families to help prevent adverse treatment through in-home parent education, coaching and referrals to community resources.

Family preservation and support programs address the needs of the family as a whole, delivering services in their homes, neighborhoods and communities to help promote positive development and prevent adverse outcomes. Parents and families gain new competencies, make family-community connections and improve child health, well-being and family functioning. In 2016, we served more than 660 families with over 7,100 home visits. 98 percent of those children had an identified medical home, 97 percent of families had a plan to address a child's identified developmental concern and 80 percent of two-year old children were fully immunized.

AB 785 would allocate additional resources to invest in grants to counties, nonprofits or tribal organizations to focus on child abuse and neglect prevention. Current funding for home visiting and prevention-focused work across the state is fragmented and often inconsistent in various communities and counties. We serve parents and families out of 10 offices and 13 counties throughout the state – and each community has their own unique funding streams and collaborations.



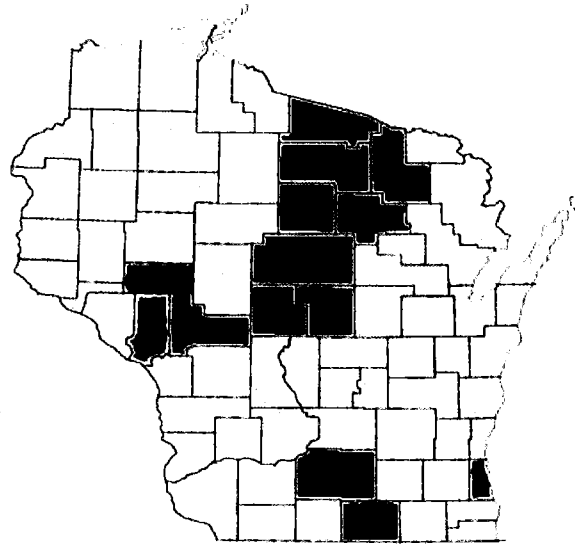
When parents have access to home visiting education, expertise and coaching, parents and children are safer, healthier and better prepared to learn and grow. I'd like to share the story of a mom in Rock County who was receiving home visiting services and had built a strong relationship with her home visitor. When mom became concerned for her child's health, she called the home visitor asking for advice and was worried about the implications seeking care might bring. The home visitor met mom and child at the emergency department, helping the child get the care she needed and helping mom through a troubling and stressful situation. While CPS was notified of the incident, because the mother was involved with home visiting and presented no imminent future risk factors, the child was able to stay in the home and they continued working as a family to improve upon their functioning goals.

By systematically prioritizing home visiting and prevention services, we can help ensure families have better access to this critical coaching and education. Home visiting and family support programs are lower cost, sustainable prevention measures aimed to reduce child welfare system involvement and will help keep children healthy, safe and at home with their parents.

Chairman Kitchens and committee members, thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of AB 785. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact me via email at [kkopcha@chw.org](mailto:kkopcha@chw.org) or via phone at 414-231-4823.

## Children's Home Visiting Services Map

Milwaukee Start Right  
Madison KinderReady  
Rock County Healthy Families  
Wausau Start Right  
Eau Claire Building Families  
Northwoods Healthy Families  
Stevens Point Strong Start





**MEMORANDUM**

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

**FROM:** Chuck Price, Director, Waupaca County Health and Human Services Department;  
President, Wisconsin County Human Service Association

Jason Witt, Director, La Crosse County Human Services Department

Katie Herrem, Executive Director, Wisconsin County Human Service Association

Sarah Diedrick-Kasdorf, Deputy Director of Government Affairs, Wisconsin Counties Association

**DATE:** January 17, 2018

**SUBJECT:** Support for Assembly Bill 785 – funding for child abuse and neglect prevention grants

The Wisconsin County Human Service Association (WCHSA) and Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) support Assembly Bill 785, which directs the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to allocate \$500,000 of TANF funding in each fiscal year to be used for grants to counties, nonprofit organizations, or tribes to fund child abuse and neglect prevention services. Under the bill, DCF is required to award the grants with the purpose of encouraging innovative practices aimed at reducing the contact that families may have with the child welfare system and preventing the removal of children from their homes. Grant recipients are required to provide matching funds equal to 9.89 percent of the grant amount awarded (current matching amount counties must pay for community aids/children and family aids).

With the child welfare system currently operating in crisis mode, the majority of child welfare funding is allocated to back end services (e.g., funding out of home placement costs) as opposed to funding prevention and early intervention services. Numerous studies have shown the harm caused to children once a child is removed from the home. From the county perspective, our social and human services departments would love to have more funding available to prevent children and families from entering the child welfare system in the first place. Therefore, numerous counties across the state approached the Speaker’s Task Force on Foster Care seeking

funding to allow child welfare staff to develop innovative programs designed to prevent a family's entry into the child welfare system.

The purpose of proposing what counties termed a "venture innovation fund" was to provide counties with access to a flexible pot of "seed money" for programs and initiatives focused on stabilizing families to prevent their entry into the child welfare system and/or foster care. Grants would have a focus on early intervention with families that present with a level of risk, but not significant safety concerns.

The funding allocated in the bill could be used to more robustly support existing programs or to launch entirely new efforts. For example, La Crosse County shared with the Speaker's Task Force its La Crosse Area Family Collaborative (LAFC) initiative. Under that partnership, La Crosse County supports neighborhood social workers who are embedded in certain high-need neighborhoods and elementary schools. These experienced social workers are given a lot of flexibility on how they can engage and build relationships with at-risk families to stabilize their situations and prevent their need for child welfare services. They work with lots of partners (e.g., neighborhood-based police officers, teachers, local churches) and have access to a flexible funding "pool" to assist families with emergency basic needs. The program has been operating for about a year and a half and it has contributed to the first significant decline in child welfare referrals that La Crosse County has experienced in many years. Other counties may use "venture innovation funds" to support initiatives such as community response or in-home safety services, or an entirely new idea.

The value of a flexible fund like this is that it would not dictate that solutions or approaches fit into a certain "box." The problem with many grant programs is that they are so narrowly focused (must address one type of addiction issue, like opioids, or promote a certain existing type of practice or approach). The "venture innovation fund" concept is meant to really leverage the creativity that exists at the county level for solutions that are tailored to meet what may be unique needs.

Therefore, WCA and WCHSA respectfully request your support for Assembly Bill 785.

Thank you for considering our comments.



TO: The Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families  
FROM: Kathy Markeland, Associate Director  
DATE: January 17, 2018  
RE: **WAFCA Support for Foster Forward Proposals**

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On behalf of the Wisconsin Association of Family & Children's Agencies (WAFCA), thank you for the opportunity to share our support for the five proposals before the Committee today as a result of the work of the Speaker's Task Force on Foster Care.

WAFCA is a statewide association that represents over fifty child and family serving agencies and leaders in the field and advocates for the more than 250,000 individuals and families that they serve each year. Our members' services include family, group and individual counseling; substance use treatment; crisis intervention; outpatient mental health therapy; and foster care programs, among many others.

Over the past several months, WAFCA has appreciated the opportunity to work closely with the Speaker's Task Force as they developed a range of proposals to improve systems of care for Wisconsin's children and families. WAFCA and our members agencies urged the Task Force to focus on prevention, earlier intervention and strategies for supporting parents. The more we can do to help build healthy families, the greater the chances that children will be safe and secure at home. In fact, the Task Force heard significant testimony on the value of investing in families sooner to prevent child abuse and neglect and how supporting parents in a variety of ways throughout the CHIPS process is the best way to move children to permanence more quickly and reduce trauma.

#### **2017 Assembly Bill 785 – Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Grants**

WAFCA strongly supports efforts to expand earlier intervention strategies with families and supports the funding provided in AB 785 which increases Wisconsin's investment in prevention services. The flexible grant dollars provided in AB 785 will foster further innovation in services and enable additional expansion of proven strategies such as home visiting, which keeps children safe and nurtured with their parents and diverts at-risk families from a path to future child welfare system involvement.

In 2016 more than 1500 caregivers were served in federally funded home visiting programs across the state. Additional families were served in home visiting programs funded by community and local dollars, however, we know that we are only reaching a small percentage of those who could benefit. AB 785 continues Wisconsin moving in the right direction to further secure support for these smart investments in family stability.

#### **Assembly Bill 783 – Child Welfare Caseload Study**

The study proposed in AB 783 will provide invaluable information to help the state improve support for county child welfare services. The Task Force heard compelling testimony regarding the strained child welfare workforce, which has become even more overloaded by the influx of children from families with



drug-related concerns. As caseloads expand, intake workers and case managers are more susceptible to burnout and turnover escalates. A 2004 study of caseworker turnover in Milwaukee showed a direct correlation between caseworker turnover and a child achieving timely permanence. In fact, the data was stark showing that 74.5% of children entering care in a calendar year who had one caseworker during that time exited to permanence. Only 17.5% of children with two case managers exited to permanence in that same year.

A strained case management workforce also negatively impacts our foster home recruitment and retention efforts. One of the primary concerns expressed by foster parents is lack of support while a child is placed in their home. When caseworkers are stretched, they do not have the time to sit with foster parents and support them in the critical work they do. Foster parents are the best recruiters for new homes – when we lose one quality foster home, we lose many potential homes, as well.

With regard to the composition of the Task Force, we recommend that one or more representatives from the private ongoing case management agencies in Milwaukee be included among the appointees to represent DMCPs, given the significant role of these agencies in the system.

### **2017 Assembly Bill 787- Funding for Grants to Support Foster Parents and Foster Children**

WAFCA members that are licensed by the state to serve as child placing agencies are key partners in the recruitment and support of foster parents across the state. Our members collaborate with the state and counties to continually identify and develop new foster care resources and ensure that our state has a full continuum of quality homes to best match the needs of children coming into care. The grant funding proposed in AB 787 would be a valuable resource to support all of our licensed homes in some of the following ways:

*AB 787 could help fund support for foster children.* While the monthly foster care rate may be adjusted and negotiated with a county to address the special needs of each individual child, there are times when county budgets are stretched. AB 787 would provide a secondary outlet to address additional foster care related expenses. An example of such expenses would be supporting driver's education and insurance coverage for a foster youth.

*AB 787 could provide additional respite.* Respite is an important support for foster parents that helps to prevent burn out. While counties are not mandated to provide respite for their Level 2 foster homes, they make efforts to support this service within their limited budgets. The funding available under AB 787 could be resource to expand access to qualified respite support.

*AB 787 could expand access to advanced training.* CPAs are responsible for providing initial and ongoing training for their licensed foster homes. Many of the more experienced treatment foster parents would benefit from enhanced training opportunities through universities or national conferences. Counties and private agencies are often not able to afford these advanced training opportunities, which would improve the skills of quality homes, validate their professional contribution to children's treatment and develop their capacity to serve as mentors and teachers within our system.

*AB 787 could support foster parent recognition.* Counties and CPAs across the state look for opportunities to celebrate their homes and make their providers feel valued. Some agencies do this through recreational opportunities or parties or small gifts/incentives for length of service. In tight budget times, these incentives are frequently the first item to be eliminated. AB 787 would provide a welcome opportunity to say "thank you" to our foster homes.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear in support of the "Foster Forward" package before you today. We look forward to working with the Committee to advance these proposals.



**WRITTEN STATEMENT OF  
JORDAN WILDERMUTH, MSW, WISCONSIN GOVERNMENT RELATIONS MANAGER  
NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICE**

**SUBMITTED TO THE  
WISCONSIN ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

**JANUARY 17, 2017**

Good morning Chairman Kitchens and members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 785 which directs \$500,000 of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding in each fiscal year to be used for grants to counties, nonprofit organizations, or tribes to fund child abuse and neglect prevention services. On behalf of Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), an evidence-based home visiting program that positively transforms the lives of vulnerable babies, mothers and families, we thank the sponsors of this legislation for specifically highlighting prevention services.

For those children that survive abuse and neglect, the legacy is often devastating, frequently leading to lifelong struggles. As the rate of child abuse rises, we must also understand that there are many deeply rooted, complicated and interrelated societal factors that can contribute to child abuse and neglect. Because of this complexity, NFP not only supports the passage of this legislation, but also the implementation of evidence-based prevention programs based on models that have been rigorously evaluated and shown to be effective.

A published systematic review<sup>i</sup> of more than 40 NFP evaluations enrolling 1,000 low-income families in NFP will result in the following:

- 33.5% fewer injuries treated in emergency departments (EDs) or admitted to hospital through age 2.
- Reduction of child abuse and neglect by 31.9% from birth through at least age 15
- Reduction in criminal offenses, substance use, intimate partner violence

Additionally, early childhood programs, like home visiting can deliver a return on investment as high as 13% per year.<sup>ii</sup> The estimated state and federal cost savings due to NFP will average \$21,481 per family served or 2.5 times the cost of the program by the child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>iii</sup>

NFP's vision, which I believe is everyone's collective vision, is "a future where all children are healthy, families thrive, communities prosper, and the cycle of poverty is broken." Directing TANF funds for child abuse and neglect prevention services brings us all one step closer to making that vision a reality.

<sup>i</sup> Miller TR. Projected outcomes of Nurse-Family Partnership home visitation during 1996-2013, United States. *Prevention Science*, 16:6, 755-777, 2015.

<sup>ii</sup> Garcia, Heckman, Leaf, & Prados (2016). The Life-cycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program. HCEO Working Paper. [www.heckmanequation.org](http://www.heckmanequation.org).

<sup>iii</sup> Miller, T.R. (2015). Projected outcomes of Nurse-Family Partnership home visitation during 1996-2013, USA. *Prevention Science*. 16 (6). 765-777. This fact sheet relies on a state-specific return on investment calculator derived by Dr. Miller from published national estimates to project state-specific outcomes and associated return on investment. The calculator is revised periodically to reflect major research updates (latest revision: 3/27/2017).