



RACHAEL A. CABRAL-GUEVARA

STATE SENATOR • 19TH SENATE DISTRICT

*Testimony before the Senate Committee on Mental Health, Substance Abuse Prevention,
Children and Families*

Senator Rachael Cabral-Guevara

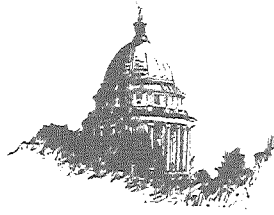
November 1, 2023

Hello, members of the Senate Committee on Mental Health, Substance Abuse Prevention, Children and Families. Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony on Senate Bill 381, a simple bill allowing for a virtual preadoption training option.

To briefly explain, the current law around adoption training requirements has not kept up with the reality of changing times. A total of twenty-five hours of training is required before parents can adopt. Six of these hours are currently required to be held in-person, creating an unnecessary barrier to adoption.

Beyond the high price tag of the adoption process, mandating these parents take off of work, spend money on hotels, and pay other travel costs for overnights can be avoided with this simple change. Interactive training can be done live, virtually.

With this change, we not only cut red tape during the adoption process, we also lower the cost. This bipartisan goal is something that takes a step in the right direction, and I am hopeful for your support.



PAUL TITTL

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 25TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Senate Committee on Mental Health, Substance Abuse Prevention,
Children and Families
Senate Bill 381
November 1, 2023

First of all, I would like to thank you, Chairman James and committee members, for allowing me to testify before you concerning Senate Bill 381 related to preadoption training.

Under this bill, potential adoptive parents will be able to receive adoptive parent education online rather than in person.

The State of Wisconsin currently requires 26 hours of training before parents can adopt. Six of these hours must be live, in-person training. That requirement can be challenging for potential adoptive parents, because in-person training is not offered in every Wisconsin county. As a result, in order to receive the training some prospective parents may need to take additional time away from work and incur additional travel expense.

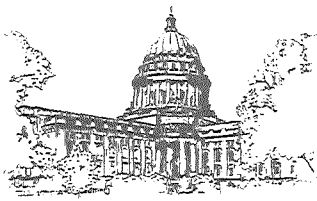
This bill makes a simple change that would allow the required 6 hours of interactive training to be either in-person or live virtual. The adopting parent could choose either one. Either choice would maintain the strict standards for preadoption classwork. However, the change would make it easier for some potential adoptive parents to complete the requirements.

This bill had bi-partisan support last session and passed in the Senate by unanimous vote.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today. I would appreciate your support for this change and will be happy to take any questions.

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STATE SENATOR LaTonya Johnson

WISCONSIN STATE SENATE

6TH DISTRICT

**Senate Committee on Mental Health, Substance Abuse Prevention, Children and Families
Testimony on Senate Bill 381
November 1, 2023**

Good afternoon Chairman James and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of this very important proposal—SB 381—which allows adoptive parents to complete in-person training requirements through a live video conference.

During the height of the pandemic, risk of exposure to COVID-19 delayed many adoptions in Wisconsin due to in-person training requirements. Under this bill, pre-adoptive parents will still receive the same interactive training via a virtual platform as they would in-person. SB 383 does not eliminate in-person training. Instead, it brings pre-adoption training in line with foster care training requirements, which have the flexibility to conduct live interactive virtual trainings.

While crafting this bill, both the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families and the Wisconsin Association of Children and Family Agencies were consulted, and both agencies are in support of this legislation.

We all want to see Wisconsin's children find their forever home, but parents shouldn't have to choose between their health and taking a six hour, in-person training in order to achieve it. This bill is a common sense solution that will allow children and families to reach adoption finalization more quickly, safely, and conveniently.

Once again, thank you to committee members for your consideration of this important piece of legislation, and thank you to my co-authors--Sen. Cabral-Guevara, Rep. Tittl, and Rep. Snodgrass--for their hard work on this bipartisan bill.

Lee STATE REPRESENTATIVE
SNODGRASS

To: Senate Committee on Mental Health, Substance Abuse Prevention, Children and Families
From: Representative Lee Snodgrass
Re: Testimony on Senate Bill 381
Date: November 1, 2023

Chair James, Ranking Member Johnson, and committee members,

It is my honor to be here with you this afternoon offering testimony on Senate Bill 381, relating to pre-adoption training formats.

This proposed legislation came about in what I believe is the best way bills often do— from a genuine need brought forth by a constituent. Wendy was in the process of becoming eligible to be an adoptive parent and informed me that the state required 25 hours of pre-adoption class work and six of those hours were required to be in person. As an immunocompromised individual who faces significant health risks if exposed to viruses and illness, the in-person requirement was a concern for Wendy. While Wendy's barrier to accessible participation was health-related, for many prospective adoptive families, the in-person requirement poses a challenge due to their location or employment, limiting their flexibility to travel. The in-person instruction component is only offered in six municipalities. Travel time, expense, and lack of job flexibility *can* and *do* present an additional barrier to prospective parents who have much to offer and are anxious to provide a loving, forever home to waiting children as quickly as possible.

Please note, that this straightforward bill does not eliminate in-person training. Instead, it brings pre-adoption training in line with foster care requirements, which already have the flexibility to conduct live, interactive virtual training. This change will uphold the rigor and integrity of the required training while increasing accessible options to prospective parents completing their training requirements. This bill has the potential to increase the eligible pool of adoptive parents, save state money in administering the coursework, and most importantly minimize a barrier in providing forever homes with loving families to waiting babies and children without undue delay.

Thank you to my co-author Representative Tittl for bringing this forward and for the committee's consideration of this simple, common sense solution for potential adoptive parents.

Sincerely,


Representative Lee Snodgrass



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30% POST-CONSUMER FIBER



TO: Chair James, Vice-Chair Cabral-Guevara, and Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Mental Health, Substance Abuse Prevention, Children and Families

FROM: Ragen Shapiro, Legislative Advisor

DATE: November 1, 2023

SUBJECT: 2023 Senate Bill ~~520~~ **381**

The Department of Children and Families is committed to the goal that all Wisconsin children and youth are safe and loved members of thriving families and communities. In support of that goal and the desire for children to achieve permanency, DCF is testifying in favor of SB-~~520~~ **381**.

In 2022, there were 932 adoptions finalized in Wisconsin, broadly defined in three ways:

- (1) Public adoptions, which involves adoption from the child welfare system and made up 82% (766) of 2022 adoptions;
- (2) Private adoptions, which involve a non-child welfare child, are handled by a private child placing agency, and made up 15 % (139) of 2022 adoptions; and
- (3) International adoptions, which are also handled by a private child placing agency, can be finalized either in the United States or the foreign country, and made up 3% (27) of 2022 adoptions.

Under current law, a prospective adoptive parent who has not previously adopted a child must complete at least 25 hours of preadoption preparation requirements- including six hours of training that is provided in person (either individually or in a group) and at least six hours of training that is appropriate to the specific needs of the child to be adopted-before the proposed adoptive parent may receive placement of a child for adoption or bring a child into this state for adoption. Under some circumstances, a child may be placed in a home of a proposed adoptive parent prior to completion of these training requirements if that home has already been licensed as a foster home and an evaluation has been conducted to determine if the home is suitable for the child.

Modifying existing statute to allow for training in-person “or through a live videoconference session” will allow DCF and adoption agencies flexibility to provide pre-adoptive preparation training requirements through interactive training platforms such as Zoom. While this change was initially proposed due to COVID-19 concerns, enacting this change at this time will increase timeliness in adoption finalizations. This change would support DCF’s mission of achieving timely permanency for children in Wisconsin. In the long-term, this small technical change proposed in this bill will have a tremendous impact on families that face additional barriers related to in-person training, particularly those living in rural areas. Based on feedback we have received, our understanding is that adoption agencies and the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS) also welcome this added flexibility in training modality.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation.