



JIM DOYLE
GOVERNOR
STATE OF WISCONSIN

April 7, 2008

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY:

I am vetoing Assembly Bill 676 in its entirety. The bill would allow or expand access to juvenile court record information for courts, prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, the Department of Health and Family Services, county child welfare departments and licensed child welfare agencies without those individuals or entities first having to obtain a court order.

The initial goal of AB 676 is a laudable one, and I support legislative reform in this very important area. I agree, for example, with the bill's proponents that certain juvenile court record files should be more readily accessible for child protective service social workers who would use juvenile court record information to help ensure that children are being placed in households that are as safe as possible. However, I am vetoing AB 676 because it is too broad and would undo significant protections concerning the confidentiality of sensitive information regarding children.

Specifically, this legislation makes juvenile records available to far too many people. AB 676 would allow anyone working for a law enforcement agency to obtain juvenile court records as long as the records were obtained for the purpose of investigating alleged criminal activity. The bill contains no restrictions on who in law enforcement would be authorized to access the records, or what type of thresholds must be met before otherwise confidential juvenile files could be unsealed. AB 676 similarly would allow any employee of the Department of Health and Family Services, a county social service agency, or a licensed child welfare agency, unrestricted access to sensitive information regarding children.

Furthermore, the bill does not define or limit what information in a juvenile court record should be made accessible to the government and child welfare agencies specified in the bill. Juvenile court records may often contain alcohol and drug assessments, psychological evaluations or other treatment records. This very sensitive information should be closely guarded. Allowing access to these types of juvenile records goes beyond the information needed to meet the initial intent of the legislation.

I have long supported the important work done by child protective service social workers who want to ensure that every placement option for a child is as safe as possible. However, AB 676 broadens access to juvenile records far beyond what is required to accomplish that goal and expands access to far too many individuals and entities without adequate protections. I strongly encourage the Legislature to introduce revised

legislation as soon as possible that addresses the access needs of child protective service social workers but also properly balances the need to protect from disclosure sensitive information concerning children. I look forward to working with the Legislature to accomplish that end.

Respectfully submitted,

JIM DOYLE
Governor