State of Wisconsin
2025 - 2026 LEGISLATURE

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LRB-1859/2
EHS:cdc

2025 SENATE BILL 259

May 20, 2025 - Introduced by Senator JACQUE, cosponsored by Representatives BROOKS, DITTRICH, GUNDRUM, MAXEY, MURPHY, MURSAU, SNYDER, WICHGERS and BEHNKE. Referred to Committee on Natural Resources, Veteran and Military Affairs.

AN ACT ***to amend*** 48.981 (7) (a) (intro.); ***to create*** 48.981 (3) (c) 2r. of the statutes; **relating to:** the notice of an investigation of child abuse or neglect or unborn child abuse provided to appropriate authorities of the U.S. Department of Defense.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

Under current law, if a county department of human services or social services or, in Milwaukee County, the Department of Children and Families or a licensed child welfare agency under contract with DCF (collectively "agency") determines that a caregiver is suspected of committing or threatening abuse or neglect of a child or that a person who is not a caregiver has committed or threatened abuse of a child related to sex trafficking; cannot identify an individual who is suspected of abuse or neglect or of threatened abuse or neglect of a child; or suspects abuse of an unborn child, the agency must, within 24 hours after receiving the report, initiate a diligent investigation to determine if the child or unborn child is in need of protection or services.

Under this bill, if an agency knows or has reason to know that a parent of a child or unborn child with respect to whom the agency has initiated such an investigation is a member of the U.S. armed forces, a reserve component of the U.S. armed forces, or the Wisconsin national guard, the agency must provide notice of that investigation to the appropriate authorities of the U.S. Department of Defense

within 24 hours. The bill requires the notice to consist only of the name and address of the child or expectant mother and the fact that an investigation has been initiated about that child or unborn child. The bill imposes the same confidentiality requirements on such a notice as current law imposes on all reports of suspected child abuse or neglect.

For further information see the state and local fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. 48.981 (3) (c) 2r. of the statutes is created to read:

48.981 **(3)** (c) 2r. If an agency initiates an investigation under subd. 1. a. pertaining to a child or unborn child and the agency knows or has reason to know that a parent of the child or unborn child is a member of the U.S. armed forces, a reserve component of the U.S. armed forces, or the Wisconsin national guard, the agency shall provide notice to the appropriate authorities of the U.S. department of defense within 24 hours of initiating the investigation. The notice shall consist only of the name and address of the child or expectant mother and the fact that an investigation has been initiated about that child or unborn child.

SECTION 2. 48.981 (7) (a) (intro.) of the statutes is amended to read:

48.981 **(7)** (a) (intro.) All reports made under this section, notices provided under sub. (3) (bm) and (c) 2r., and records maintained by an agency and other persons, officials, and institutions shall be confidential. Reports and records may be disclosed only to the following persons:

(END)