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STATE SENATOR • 17<sup>TH</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

January 27, 2016

## TESTIMONY ON SENATE 256

Thank you Chairman Wanggaard and the Senate Committee on Judiciary & Public Safety for allowing me to testify in support of Senate Bill 256, relating to making a terrorist threat and providing a criminal penalty.

In May of 2014, a man posted a message on Facebook threatening to shoot up an elementary school in Reedsburg. While the individual claimed that he had no intention of carrying out this act, this incident created a large disruption to the Reedsburg Police Department and the school district. In this particular case, the individual only paid a few hundred dollars in bail to get out of jail and was charged with a misdemeanor.

While it was deemed safe students to attend school the next day, over 200 families in Reedsburg chose to keep their kids at home. This incident had disrupted the school day and the schedules of many families in Reedsburg.

Under current law, if an individual calls in a certain type of mass threat, such as a bomb threat, they would be subject to a felony, but the statutes do not address someone threatening to “shoot up” a public place. The police department went to his home and determined that the threat was not credible. He was charged with misdemeanor disorderly conduct and was released from jail.

Representative Brooks and I have authored Senate Bill 256 and Assembly Bill 341 to make this kind of threat a Class I felony in Wisconsin. If an individual threatens to cause death, bodily injury, or property damage by any means to prevent the occupation of a building, vehicle, or other public place of assembly, they would be subject to a felony charge. This would also apply if the individual intends to cause interruption or public panic. The penalty for a Class I felony in Wisconsin is a fine up to \$10,000 and/or a prison sentence of up to three years and six months.

We believe this legislation would address situations like the one in Reedsburg and ensure that individuals who threaten to harm others and create disruption will face appropriate penalties.

I would like to thank Representative Brooks for his leadership on this legislation and the City of Reedsburg for working with our offices to address this concern.