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# Romaine Robert Quinn

STATE SENATOR • 25<sup>TH</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

From: Senator Romaine Robert Quinn  
To: Assembly Committee on Children and Families  
Re: **Assembly Bill 336**  
Date: November 1, 2023

Thank you committee members for receiving my testimony today on Assembly Bill 336, a bill regarding a financial assistance grant program for adoption in Wisconsin. This legislation is part of a package of bills, referred to as “Embrace Them Both,” which together demonstrate a clear commitment to both the mother and child, as well as families throughout the state, in an effort to restore the culture of life that is slowly eroding from our state’s cultural discourse.

Private adoptions can cost in the tens of thousands of dollars. Families considering adoption sometimes stop the process or withdraw from consideration because they cannot afford it. This is wrong – we should continue to support all families (both birth families and adoptive families) for whom adoption is their path.

There are a few organizations in Wisconsin that offer financial assistance to adoptive families once they have reached a certain point in the process. For those curious to learn more, a list can be found at the website for the Coalition for Children, Youth & Families. In an effort to reduce overhead, this bill creates a competitive grant program to be awarded to an organization already operating a financial assistance program to supplement their work.

Under the bill, families can receive up to \$10,000 to defray adoption expenses. The bill allocates \$5 million for the competitive grant program and limits the amount that can be used for administrative expenses. Furthermore, to ensure this is lifting up Wisconsin birth and adoptive families, this grant is available for Wisconsin families who are adopting Wisconsin children.

Assembly Amendment 1 was crafted as a result of feedback received from the Department of Children and Families in the Senate committee hearing. The amendment clarifies the inclusion of adoptions through tribal court and that the financial assistance in this bill cannot be used for expenses that are paid or reimbursed in another DCF program.

If a woman chooses to place her child for adoption, there should be no doubt that there is a family ready and able to raise the child. Please join me and Representative Rozar in supporting AB 336 which will help ensure that the cost of adoption is not a barrier for children to enter a loving home.



# DONNA M. ROZAR

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## Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Children and Families

### Assembly Bill 336

November 1, 2023

Thank you Chair Snyder, Vice-Chair Goeben, and members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families for holding this hearing on Assembly Bill (AB) 336, relating to a grant program for financial assistance for adoption and making an appropriation. As described in the Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB), AB 336 requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to administer a competitive grant program for the purpose of providing financial assistance to prospective adoptive families. The requirements for receiving this grant are detailed and prescriptive, but not onerous.

As the mother of five adopted children, I understand the financial toll the adoption process can have on a family. We all know it is important that children be adopted into a loving and caring family unit. Through the financial support of this grant, we can ensure that money is not a barrier for children to enter a loving home.

With few organizations in Wisconsin offering financial assistance to adoptive families who reach a certain point in the process, SB 346 provides an opportunity for qualified families to complete the adoption process and provide a stable home for children in need of adoption.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this Bill. Unfortunately, due to a scheduling conflict I was unable to attend this hearing. Feel free to reach out to my office if you have any questions.





## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Representative Patrick Snyder, Chair  
Members, Assembly Committee on Children & Families

FROM: Tia Izzia, Associate Director for Human Life & Social Concerns

DATE: November 1, 2023

RE: Support for AB-336 Adoption Grants and AB-369 Newborn Infant Safety Devices

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The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops of Wisconsin, urges you to support Assembly Bill 336, creating a grant program for financial assistance for adoption, and Assembly Bill 369, authorizing newborn infant safety devices under the safe haven law.

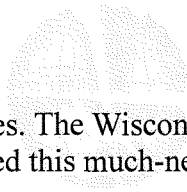
### ***AB-336 Adoption Grants***

As a society, every effort should be made to keep families united and to offer parents the resources needed to support their children. However, when extraordinary needs or circumstances persist, adoption can provide a needed avenue for parents to place their children in a stable and loving home. If a woman chooses to place her child for adoption, there should be no doubt in her mind that there is a family that can welcome and raise her child.

However, for the many families willing and eager to adopt, the cost of adoption is often a steep barrier. For this reason, SB-346 creates an Adoption Financial Assistance Grant Program to make adoption a more affordable option for all Wisconsin families. Awards are limited to \$10,000 per family and may only be awarded to or on behalf of families in this state who are adopting children in this state. One does not have to be affluent to be a good parent. Grants such as these can make the process far more affordable and humane. In the words of Pope Francis, “How many children in the world are waiting for someone to take care of them! And how many married couples want to be fathers and mothers but are unable to do so for biological reasons; or, although they already have children, they want to share their family’s affection with those who do not have it. We should not be afraid to choose the path of adoption, to take the ‘risk’ of welcoming children.”

### ***AB-369 Newborn Infant Safety Devices***

While as a society, we must always work to ensure that women and their children can remain united and receive the help they need to flourish, we know that there are women in complex circumstances who will decide to relinquish their child after giving birth. This has always been the case throughout history. Today, these circumstances might include an unsafe home environment, drug use, domestic abuse, fear of entanglement with law enforcement, and other difficult situations. SB-369 provides women with a last resort and anonymous option to ensure their own safety and that of their child. Additionally, newborn infant safety devices keep vulnerable infants safe because they are cared for immediately by trained professionals. This bill is in keeping with the bipartisan 2001 safe haven law, which came out of



the Speaker’s Task Force on Abandoned Babies. The Wisconsin Catholic Conference, along with Planned Parenthood, and many others supported this much-needed service.

These two bills are part and parcel of embracing both mother and child. They save the lives of children and give them a chance to flourish. They give birth mothers the security of knowing that their children will find love and stability.

Even as we strongly support these bills, the WCC will continue to push for proposals that ensure that mothers can remain united with their children and that both can thrive. There are many more proposals that get us closer to this goal: expanding postpartum care, reducing costs for birth, eliminating racial disparities in maternal and infant mortality, supporting birth mothers after adoption, removing sales tax on feminine hygiene products and baby supplies, increasing the tax exemption for dependents, funding for pregnancy resource centers, and more.

Together, we can and must build an economy and society in Wisconsin where women and children can flourish. For all these reasons, we urge you to pass Assembly Bills 336 and 369.



**TO:** Members, Assembly Committee on Children and Families

**FROM:** Gracie Skogman, Legislative Director, Wisconsin Right to Life

**DATE:** Wednesday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023

**RE:** AB 336, Relating to: a grant program for financial assistance for adoption and making an appropriation.

Thank you, Chairman Snyder and members of the committee, for your time today. My name is Gracie Skogman, and I am the Legislative Director of Wisconsin Right to Life, testifying in favor of AB 336.

The pro-life community cares deeply about offering protection and support to preborn children, and their mothers, through pregnancy and beyond. We also care deeply about ensuring that each child finds a loving and safe home, yet we are aware that the financial toll of adoption can often be a barrier to families who are looking to adopt.

We have the privilege of hearing directly from countless families who are hoping to adopt, women who have decided the adoption is the best option for their preborn children, and those who were raised in loving adoptive homes. All of these individuals are deserving of thanks for the selfless choices they have made, and in need of support to ensure the adoption process in our state remains accessible.

Wisconsin Right to Life thanks Representative Rozar and Senator Quinn for bringing this legislation forward and urge your full support.

Thank you very much for your time,  
Gracie Skogman





ProLife  
LOVE. FOR LIFE. WI.

**Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 336: a grant program for financial assistance for adoption and making an appropriation**  
**Assembly Committee on Children and Families**  
**By Matt Sande, Director of Legislation, Pro-Life Wisconsin**

**November 1, 2023**

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Good afternoon, Chairman Snyder and Committee members. My name is Matt Sande and I serve as director of legislation for Pro-Life Wisconsin. Thank you for this opportunity to express our strong support for Assembly Bill (AB) 336, legislation that requires the Department of Children and Families to administer a competitive grant program that provides \$5 million biennially to an adoption organization that provides financial assistance to parents seeking adoptions.

Adoption is often cost prohibitive for families in Wisconsin and across the nation, creating a financial chasm that is unbridgeable between children who need families and the families who want them so desperately. According to the Wisconsin Adoption Information Center, the average cost of a domestic infant adoption is between \$15,000 and \$25,000 while a private/independent infant adoption ranges from \$10,000 to \$30,000. Depending on the type of infant adoption chosen, costs could include adoption home study, legal fees, agency fees, allowable birth parent expenses, profile preparation, matching process, placement, and follow-up services. (<https://wiadopt.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/domesticpackagepacketnewsreads20194fp-gc.pdf>)

We must do more, publicly and privately, to make adoption affordable for families. The creation of the grant program in AB 336 will open the door of opportunity for children and families in a new way. Assisting prospective adoptive parents with a \$10,000 award will help many on the financial fence move forward with this loving gift. It is no exaggeration to say that the fate of AB 336 could financially make or break the decision of many families in Wisconsin to adopt a child.

Encouraging and enabling the life-saving alternative of adoption is a priority for Pro-Life Wisconsin. We thank the bill's author, Representative Donna Rozar, for her deep commitment to adoptive families in this state. Assembly Bill 336 is a big step in the right direction, and we encourage Committee members to recommend it for passage in the full Assembly.

Thank you for your consideration, and I am happy to answer any questions committee members may have for me.



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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY BILL 336  
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2023  
JULAIN K. APPLING, PRESIDENT**

Thank you, Chairman Snyder and committee members, for the opportunity to testify regarding Assembly Bill 336.

I am Julaine Appling, president of Wisconsin Family Action. Wisconsin Family Action supports Assembly Bill 336. Wisconsin Family Action has long advocated for the natural family, which we define as a married dad and mom and their biological and/or adopted children. Anytime a child is in need of a family, or a couple is looking to add to their family, adoption is a good option. How appropriate that we are having this hearing today, November 1, because November is designated as National Adoption Month, bring special awareness to this wonderful option for both children and couples.

Many years ago now, a young married couple in Atlanta, Georgia, were wanting a family but could not have biological children. They went through a private adoption agency in Atlanta, completing forms, doing home visits, and more until one day, they received a call from the agency telling them they had a baby girl for them. And that's how I, as a five-month-old infant, became part of the Bob and Mary Appling family. Three and one-half years later, we completed our family unit when my parents adopted my brother. We were not biologically related to each other, but we loved and lived just as biological siblings do!

Because my adoption story began so long ago, I suspect my brother and I both came pretty cheap! That said, I know even back then my father was making a good living because he was already in management for General Motors and at a minimum, my parents had to show they could afford to care for us appropriately. So money was an issue in some way. I regret never asking my parents how much it cost them to adopt me. I've tried to research to get some general idea of what a private adoption cost in the 50s but have found nothing definitive. That said, today we know for sure that private adoptions have become very expensive, which means some couples don't even try.

Estimates from the National Adoption Network are that somewhere between 8,000 and 15,000 couples in Wisconsin are waiting to adopt a child.<sup>1</sup>

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Child Welfare website, reports the typical cost of an independent infant adoption can easily exceed \$25,000.<sup>2</sup>

We applaud Senator Quinn for introducing this bill that appropriates \$5,000,000 each biennium for a grant program that, through the Department of Children and Families, would award up to \$10,000 per eligible Wisconsin family to adopt a child in Wisconsin. This grant program is exclusively for private adoptions and requires the Department of Children and Families to grant a qualified agency the funds, and the agency then distributes the grants to qualified families.

This legislation provides an incentive for families to adopt as it will significantly lower the barrier of the expense of adopting a child, thereby providing more children a forever family. These families offer these children the opportunity to grow up healthy, educated, well-adjusted and ready to be contributing adults to our society. Thus, helping parents financially with the costs of adoption ultimately helps the state.

For these reasons, we support Assembly Bill 336 and urge its passage. Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> [US Adoption Statistics | Adoption Network](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Planning for Adoption: Knowing the Costs and Resources \(childwelfare.gov\)](#)