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# PATRICK SNYDER

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 85<sup>th</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

## Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 116

Assembly Committee on Local Government

May 28, 2025

Chairman Novak and members of the Committee:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on AB 116. This legislation was drafted as part of the Legislative Council Study Committee on Emergency Detention and Civil Commitment of Minors. The Study Committee introduced several other proposals to improve the emergency detention and civil commitment process but this bill is an incredibly important part of the overall effort.

Under current law, a law enforcement officer must transport a minor who is subject to an emergency detention to the detention facility. This requirement is a drain on law enforcement and saps resources from crime prevention efforts. Additionally, allowing counties to use other providers to transport kids under emergency detention can lessen the trauma experienced by the child.

This bill would rather require the county that approved the detention to undertake the transport. It should be noted that the Department of Health Services would need to seek federal approval for Medical Assistance funding so that counties that have transported minors to emergency detention can request reimbursement to DHS.

I am open to any questions from the Committee.



May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Representative Novak, Chair

Representative Donovan, Vice-Chair

Members of the Assembly Committee on Local Government

**Testimony on 2025 Assembly Bill 116**

Thank you, Chair Novak and other members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify today. I am pleased for the opportunity today to ask for your support for this bill that was developed by the Study Committee on Emergency Detention and Civil Commitment of Minors. I had the pleasure of chairing that study committee last year, which was tasked with studying various issues related to the appropriateness of current emergency detention and involuntary commitment laws as applied to minors.

As many of you know, these issues are deeply personal to me. As a law enforcement officer, some of the most challenging moments on the job come when I'm called to assist someone in the midst of a mental health crisis. It's always difficult, but it's especially heartbreaking when that person is a child. From the start, I hoped this committee would accomplish at least two things. The first was to provide a process to have psychiatric residential treatment facilities (PRTFs) in Wisconsin so kiddos can get the help they need without having to be sent out of the state. The second was to find ways to minimize the involvement of law enforcement in mental health crises so that children in crisis are not further traumatized by being placed in handcuffs.

After careful study and thoughtful consideration, the committee crafted a package of bills that I believe will move the ball closer to these goals. Throughout the process, the committee received assistance from a wide variety of stakeholders and experts, including the Department of Health Services, the Department of Children and Families and the Counties Association, among many others. The committee voted to advance six bills, all with strong support, and the Joint Legislative Council introduced them earlier this year.

One of those bills is in front of you today. Assembly Bill 116 is a key piece of the study committee's vision to help our kids when they most need it. Currently, when a minor is approved for emergency detention, law enforcement officers complete the transportation to the detention facility. This bill moves the responsibility of transportation to the county who approved the detention. However, this requirement only comes into effect if the Department of Health Services receives federal approval for Medical Assistance funding. Once this funding has been approved, counties that have transported minors to emergency detention can request reimbursement to DHS. This is a critical step in minimizing unnecessary law enforcement involvement and giving the counties flexibility to use other providers to move our kids.

STATE SENATOR

JESSE



JAMES

23<sup>RD</sup> DISTRICT

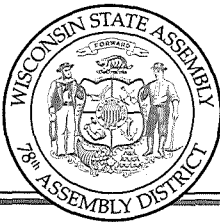
Before I conclude, I want to take a moment to thank the members of the study committee for their time and dedication. Their insights and expertise were invaluable to this process, and I truly appreciate the effort, thoughtfulness, and commitment each of them brought to our work. I also want to extend my gratitude to the teams at DHS, DCF, the Counties Association, all the other stakeholders who provided essential feedback throughout this process, as well as Legislative Council's David, Margit, and Kelly for all your assistance along the way. Thank you for considering the study committee's recommendations. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jesse James", written in a cursive style.

Senator Jesse James  
23<sup>rd</sup> Senate District  
[Sen.James@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Sen.James@legis.wisconsin.gov)





WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE

**Shelia Stubbs**

78TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**May 28, 2025**

**Assembly Bill 116—Relating to: transportation of minors for emergency detention.**

**Assembly Committee on Local Government**

Dear Chair Representative Todd Novak and Members of the Assembly Committee on Local Government,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my support for Assembly Bill 116—Relating to: transportation of minors for emergency detention.

Over the course of several months, the Study Committee on Emergency Detention and Civil Commitment of Minors gathered together legislators, legal experts, law enforcement, and youth mental health professionals to develop proposed legislation that will make the process of emergency detention and civil commitment for youth facing mental and behavioral health or substance abuse crises more efficient and supportive, as well as expanding Wisconsin's capacity to care for youth experiencing these issues.

When it is determined that emergency detention of a minor is the most appropriate response to a crisis of mental or behavioral health or substance abuse, transporting that minor to the nearest facility with an open bed can pose a complex logistical challenge. This bill specifies that the county who approves the emergency detention of a minor assumes responsibility for placing that minor in custody and for transporting the minor to an emergency detention facility, including the cost of transportation. The bill also provides that a county may contract with a law enforcement agency, ambulance service, or 3rd-party vendor to facilitate the transportation; however, law enforcement may only be used to provide transportation if they are the least restrictive and appropriate method or if they are the only viable alternative in a given situation.

Additionally, the bill provides that a county responsible for the transportation of a minor to an emergency detention facility may submit a request for reimbursement to the Department of Health Services.

By establishing standard protocols for the transportation of a minor to an emergency detention facility and clearly designating the party that is responsible for coordinating and financing the transportation, this bill streamlines the process of getting a youth experiencing a mental or behavioral health or substance abuse crisis to an appropriate facility, thus minimizing the stressors faced by youth who are already in a vulnerable and distressing situation. I appreciate your time in considering my testimony and ask that you vote yes on Assembly Bill 116.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the Study Committee on Emergency Detention and Civil Commitment of Minors for coming together and proposing legislation to improve mental health crisis responses for our youth.

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