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***Testimony before the Senate Committee on Natural Resources,
Veteran and Military Affairs***

Senator André Jacque

Senate Bill 259

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Colleagues on the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Veteran and Military Affairs:

Wisconsin is currently home to over 15,000 children of active duty and National Guard and Reserve members. The U.S. military's Family Advocacy Program provides clinical assessment, treatment and services for service members, their intimate partners, and family members involved in allegations of domestic abuse and child abuse. Federal law requires the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) to request state reports regarding instances of child abuse and neglect involving military family members.

This bill would help support the Family Advocacy Program in performing its critical mission in Wisconsin by requiring county human and social service agencies in the state to report cases against military parents to the DoD at the onset of agency investigations of abuse, neglect, or threatened abuse of born or unborn children.

It is essential that we get this information to the program so it may work as soon as possible to ensure the safety of victims and give them access to protection, care, and support. These early interventions are crucial to making available services that help victims obtain protection orders, accompaniment to court, and safety planning.

This legislation was drafted in consultation with and at the request of the Department of Defense state liaison office.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 259. I'm happy to answer any questions committee members may have.