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(FORM UPDATED: 08/11/2010)

WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ... PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS

2005-06

(session year)

Senate

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on Judiciary, Corrections and
Privacy...

COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

- Committee Reports ... **CR**
- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
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INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

- Appointments ... **Appt** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
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- Hearing Records ... bills and resolutions (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
 - (**ab** = Assembly Bill) (**ar** = Assembly Resolution) (**ajr** = Assembly Joint Resolution)
 - (**sb** = Senate Bill) (**sr** = Senate Resolution) (**sjr** = Senate Joint Resolution)
- Miscellaneous ... **Misc**

* Contents organized for archiving by: Stefanie Rose (LRB) (July 2012)

Senate

Record of Committee Proceedings

Committee on Judiciary, Corrections and Privacy

Senate Bill 24

Relating to: threats to social service workers, juvenile intake workers, child support workers, or school employees and providing a penalty.

By Senators Brown, Roessler and Stepp; cosponsored by Representatives Musser, Ziegelbauer, Shilling, Lothian, Bies, Hines, Ott and Stone.

January 24, 2005 Referred to Committee on Judiciary, Corrections and Privacy.

February 23, 2005 **PUBLIC HEARING HELD**

Present: (4) Senators Zien, Roessler, Grothman and Taylor.
Absent: (1) Senator Coggs.

Appearances For

- Jonathan Lehman, Racine — Racine County Child Support
- Glenda Cooper, Black River Falls
- Ron Brown, Madison — Senator, Senate
- Tom Corcoran, Waupan — AFSCME
- Georgette Gehring — AFSCME
- Elaine Richmond — Wisconsin Child Support Enforcement

Appearances Against

- None.

Appearances for Information Only

- None.

Registrations For

- Joseph Quick, Madison — Madison Metropolitan School District
- Julie Daggett, Madison — Lutheran Social Services
- Susan McMurry — AFSCME
- Tom Cooper
- Marc Herstand, Madison — National Association of Social Workers
- John Forester, Madison — School Administrators Alliance

Registrations Against

- None.

September 22, 2005 **EXECUTIVE SESSION HELD**

Present: (5) Senators Zien, Roessler, Grothman, Risser and
Miller.

Absent: (0) None.

Moved by Senator Roessler, seconded by Senator Zien that **Senate
Bill 24** be recommended for passage.

Ayes: (4) Senators Zien, Roessler, Risser and Miller.

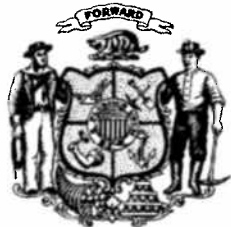
Noes: (1) Senator Grothman.

PASSAGE RECOMMENDED, Ayes 4, Noes 1

Brian Deschane
Committee Clerk



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



Department of Workforce Development
Secretary's Office
201 East Washington Avenue
P.O. Box 7946
Madison, WI 5370 -7946
Telephone: (608) 266-3131
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FEB 17 2005



State of Wisconsin
Department of Workforce Development
Jim Doyle, Governor
Roberta Gassman, Secretary

February 15, 2005

Senator Ronald Brown
31st Senate District
Room 409 South
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Brown:

I am writing in support of SB 24 relating to threats to social service workers, juvenile intake workers, child support workers, or school employees. This Department oversees the administration of the child support program in Wisconsin.

Child support workers routinely handle family issues that are emotionally charged. Aggressive enforcement of a parent's financial obligation to their children can significantly impact their lifestyle and affect their credit. There are frequent reports among child support workers of threatened violence, verbal abuse and aggressive behavior.

The federal Department of Health and Human Services conducted a study of workplace violence directed against public assistance and child support enforcement staff in 2000. When asked if they had any reason to fear for the safety of workers in their offices, 78% of child support staff and 61% of public assistance staff surveyed responded affirmatively. The work being done by these agencies is critical to the support of thousands of children in this state. I support your efforts to provide them with well deserved protections in their workplace.

Sincerely,

Roberta Gassman
Secretary

Best to you.

Dennis Arras
Douglas County Child Support Agency, Director
dennis.arras@douglascountywi.org

I have been director for 27 of the last 28 soon to be 29 years of the Douglas County Child Support Agency. I have supported licensing or certification since the idea was floated around. I absolutely support protective service for investigative staff, which I believe would/could follow certification. I have had threats made to me in grocery stores, bars, restaurants, etc. My life has been threatened numerous times. My wife was told to leave our home with my children because a man was coming to kill me and whoever was in the house with me. My car has been vandalized several times with keying, smashed windows and slashed tires. That even happened after I sold the car to the buyer. My house front porch was set on fire and my car, my son's car and our house has been "egged" several times. I was even attacked by a man while I was watching my 5 year old in a ride at the County Fair.

Child support workers in Ohio and California have been killed by angry payers right in the CSA offices. Some of my staff, in fact, most of my staff, have had dangerous confrontations with clients in public places. I have each investigative staff carry a company cell for security purposes; they have badges, I.D. ing themselves as county agents.

I am supportive of licensing/certifying investigative staff and getting them protective status; it won't help old-timers like myself, but in this violence-prone world we live in, it would be a very good idea for the future. I like the idea of licensing/certification because it would require continuing education and financing the same, which is not the way it goes now with cost-cutting for "non-certification" positions at the county level.

I sincerely hope you are successful in your efforts to criminalize threats to state/county workers.

Sincerely,

Dennis Arras

Becky Dalberg
Richland Co. Child Support Agency
PO Box 541, Richland Center, WI 53581
608-647-8291

I have been working in child support either in the Clerk of Court Office or now in the Child Support Agency since 1985.

I have been threatened and even threatened to be killed probably five times over these 19 years. Luckily they never followed through.

These were all from men that were ordered to pay child support and for some reason or another felt that they did not have to abide by the orders from the court. They came into the office to vent their anger on someone and since I was the keeper of their financial records, I got it. The whole matter didn't have anything to do with me; I was the object where they were placing their anger. Once I was able to determine just what the problem was, these encounters passed, and from 2 of the 5 I received apologies. Basically, they did not understand what the papers said and, once the matter was explained to them in a way they could understand, life was much better.

The one who was going to kill me...I avoided and alerted the other office workers to call the officers when he would present himself in the office again. Amazingly, the mere presence of an officer dispels the violent behavior, or the bullying behavior of the individual.

Sincerely,

Becky Dalberg

Kathy DeGrave
Administrative Assistant/Caseworker
Florence County Child Support Agency
kdegrave@florencewi.net

There was a case two years ago where I turned a man in for perjury in a child support case. Threats were made for my safety, and although not direct threats, I received them 2nd and 3rd hand from others that spoke with the man. Knowing this man, I felt very threatened and actually spoke to my family to be extra cautious as I felt he would take retribution on my testifying against him.

Also, one other case where we actually called the sheriff's department for assistance-- a man came into the office screaming obscenities, yelling we were trying to ruin him and making a terrible fit concerning his case. He implied that he could "take" us all out. (our office has very limited exit access and he was blocking us in. We have since then installed a "silent alarm" that sends a message to the Clerk of Courts for help.)

Sincerely,

Kathy DeGrave

Colleen Johnson
Clark County Child Support Agency, Director

I am the director of the Clark County Child Support Agency. We have had sufficient threats that we now have a procedure set up. When a worker or the agency in general has been threatened we complete an incident report, & send it to the Sheriff's Department where it is filed as a complaint.

In one case the NCP called the worker and told her he was going to "do an Oklahoma on us".

In another case the NCP lives in Florida but is from this area & comes back for visits. He called the worker a number of times threatening to kill her & others in the office. He was using a lot of profanity & calling the worker "babycakes" & telling her she better have this fixed by Friday or she would be dead.

In yet another case the NCP came in with his present wife. They were quite belligerent so I went out to talk to them myself. The wife was stomping her feet & screaming "You fucking bitch" at me. The NCP asked me to come out to the waiting area, that he doesn't like to talk thru glass & assured me he wouldn't hurt me. We had already seen Sheriff's deputies escorting him out of Community Services months prior to this. Months later we saw Sheriff's deputies escorting the NCP's wife out of court and out of the courthouse.

In another instance where the NCP is a female she called the state threatening the worker in our office saying she wanted to come in and knock her out of her chair or upside the head. Staff from the state called me on that one. This NCP then called our office and told the secretary that if the slot in our window was a little bigger she would come down here and rip him right thru the window, and she again threatened the worker by saying she wanted to come in here and knock the worker upside the head.

A male NCP called in once and told the secretary that he was going to come in here and rip his lungs out thru his nose. Our secretary is a male but does not appreciate these calls any more than the rest of us.

Off hand these are the only incidents I can think of but I know there have been more. I know one time we had Sheriff's deputies come up and escort someone out of our office.

We have an arrangement with the Sheriff's Dept that if we call them they will send deputies up to our office immediately.

I definitely think that SB 312 should include child support workers in the protected group. I wish you luck.

Sincerely,

Colleen Johnson

Mary L Paquette
Senior Child Support Investigator
Douglas County, WI.
(715) 395-1250

I have been in this job as a child support investigator in Douglas County for over 22 years. I'm happy to see someone is now paying attention to the fact that this job can be dangerous.

To write down every threat that I have received over the years would take too much time but I'll try to give you a quick summary of what has taken place over the years.

I have had bricks thrown through my windows at home, and through the back windshield of my car. I have had my tires slashed. I have had threatening phone calls in the middle of the night with the caller telling me he knew my address and the fact that I was alone in the house. I have had a very angry NCP leave my office and go home to kill his daughter and himself. I had a case where the NCP shot and killed his first wife in Minnesota and then after being sentenced, harassed the mother of his other child and myself, as there were still arrears owing here on his case.

In spite of being a relatively small county, we have a large caseload due to our border link to Duluth, MN, which also houses a federal prison.

Threats of violence are not limited to only us but to our friends and families also. Over the holidays, I was at two wedding receptions in Superior, when I was verbally assaulted by two different person, who in spite of my please, created a disturbance in front of a large crowd. I felt embarrassed that because of what I do, someone's wedding day may have been ruined. My boyfriend, family, and friends have had to "rescue" me on many occasions when I have been confronted on child support issues, by male or female clients, ex-wives, ex-husbands, current wives or husbands, boyfriends, girlfriends, etc.

I have had situations in the past where law enforcement officers, who were clients, would stop me, with sirens blaring, to yell at me about their case. I have had county board members confront me in public and private places because they had issues with their cases or spouses or children's cases. I have relatives that still harbor resentment about their cases, and I wasn't even their worker!! I have been told in detail how I would have a slow death in a dark alley. I don't go to shopping malls or stores at normal hours to avoid confrontations in public and my home phone number is unlisted.

I could spend hours on this subject. We are law enforcement workers. We are paid to enforce laws. Child support is one issues but putting a lien on someone's vehicle or property or bank account or taking their license away, can add more anger to an already stressful situation.

I've always said we are an equal hate opportunity profession. One party hates us for not getting enough money, and one party hates us for paying too much.

The majority of my caseload consists of responsible mothers and fathers who do not fall into the above categories, and that keeps me going. I believe in this system. It may not always be fair to one side or the other but in most cases it works.

We have our share of people who enter our office under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Add the volatile subject of child support or paternity to that issue, and the two don't mix well. They are often arrested in our offices under warrants obtained from the courts at our request.

About 15 years ago, I was confronted by a co-worker, from another office in the courthouse, about her own issues on her child support case. She made the comment that we were only out to ruin people's lives. The next day she brought me in a newspaper article that three child support officers were killed when an angry client stormed their office. She apologized but the fact remained the same.

Thank you for bringing this issue to the foreground. I will continue to do my job, praying that the threats remain just that, threats.

Sincerely,

Mary L Paquette

Lisa Peck
Calumet County CSA Manager
206 Court Street, Chilton, WI 53014
(920) 849-1454

I am writing because I am in support of SB 312 and I believe it is necessary to add child support workers to the list of protected workers. I have worked in child support since November 1994. The following are the incidents that stand out to me the most.

I received a call from an irate payer claiming that he was going to blow up my office. The payer knew where my office was located because he had met with me at my office previously. I had a ground level window and believed it was possible for him to throw some type of explosive device through my window. The threat came shortly after the federal building bombing in Colorado. Although I notified my supervisor at the time, nothing was done, and in fact he was allowed to walk back by himself to my office, the next day...drunk.

I attended a hearing for modification. The payer's child support was increased. No bailiff was present during that hearing. After the hearing, a bailiff was contacted because the payer was running around yelling at the acting family court commissioner, myself, and the other parent. I kept the other parent with me while the payer was advised to leave the premises. Later it was determined that the payer was stalking the payee. The payee called me and cautioned me that the payer was extremely agitated with me, the court official, and herself and that he was a stalker. The NCP was arrested approximately one week later for aggravated rape charges that occurred in Green Bay and was also charged for a murder that occurred in NC prior to our hearing.

I was meeting with a NCP and his current spouse when the payer suddenly rose from sitting at the table. He was a very tall man, turned completely red, balled his fists, and shook from anger. He threatened to go "postal" on me.

I facilitate a group called "Stepping Up to the Plate" that focuses on providing resources to non-custodial parents so that they can better manage their own resources. Many times these individuals are incarcerated. Because it is a two-hour course, I take these individuals outside for a smoke break. One particular gentleman hovered over me, pointing, shaking his fists, demanding to know who the hell the judge or myself thought we were to determine anything about his life or that of his child's. He has been arrested for domestic violence and sexual assault in the past. He has very clearly stated that the mother will end up dead if she continues to mess with him. During this episode, the payer came within an inch (literally) of striking me and spit on me. He so intimidated the other members of the group that they backed up against the wall and hung their heads in shame.

My parents recently alerted me to an article in the January 8, 2004, *Traverse City Record Eagle* (Traverse City, MI) regarding a Friend of the Court (our CSA

equivalent) worker being attacked by a payer, who then attacked an attorney attempting to assist the worker, and then attacked a police officer called to the scene.

Most inmates quickly learn where I live from word of mouth by other inmates. I do reside very close to the courthouse and have since purchased a very, very large black dog to dissuade potential intruders. All staff in our office have taken self-defense training provided by our Sheriff's department because I believe the potential for violence against child support workers is very, very real.

I am only one worker with five examples. Hopefully all child support workers do not have five of their own examples. I could see how the number of examples would increase exponentially. I hope these examples are of some use to you!

Sincerely,

Lisa Peck

Stacee Schuck
Child Support Supervisor
Jefferson County Child Support Agency
320 S. Main St., Jefferson WI 53549
(920) 674-7259

This letter is providing you with stories and scenarios that have happened in our agency.

1) Case participant in office with case worker. Case participant sitting in chair across desk from worker. Participant gets extremely angry and screams and lunges at worker. Deputies called. Disorderly conduct charges filed.

2) Case participant in court, lunges over courtroom table at Family Court Commissioner

3) Case participant in court, lunges at Family Court Commissioner (FCC) and get right in his face- inches away in a very threatening manner.

4) Case participant in courthouse- follows worker to bathroom- waits outside- follows to vehicle- follows to grocery store- gets out of vehicle and follows in store- then proceeds to follow worker on her way home- worker avoids her home and loses case participant.

5) Worker being followed to parking lot by case participant and being told " Now I know which vehicle is yours" in threatening manner

6) Worker threatened by case participant in office: " better watch you back."

7) Case participant telephones caseworker at home and informs worker that he had researched her home number so that he could call her at home because worker had sent him warning letter

8) Child Support Attorney followed by vehicle from courthouse – while vehicle was following attorney- driver of vehicle turned off lights.

9) Case participant calls upset about a tax intercept. During phone call from case participant- participant informs child support worker that he will be coming into pay the money and that he is a police officer and licensed to carry a gun. Sheriff's department was notified and he was given an escort to the agency when he made his payment.

10) Case participant threatened : " I have gun, and I do not know who it will be used on, you or me".

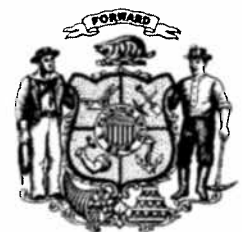
I hope that this information is helpful, and if you have any questions please let me know.

Sincerely,

Stacee Schuck



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE





Testimony on 2005 Senate Bill 24
Senate Committee on Judiciary, Corrections and Privacy
February 23, 2005

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, and thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of Senate Bill (SB) 24.

SB 24 would provide a measure of protection to certain public employees who are subject to threats of violence due to their work with families in crisis. Specifically, the bill makes threats of bodily harm to juvenile intake workers, school employees, child support workers and social service workers a Class A misdemeanor (subject to a fine of up to \$10,000 and nine months in jail or both). In order to be subject to prosecution, the perpetrator must know or have reason to know that the victim is, or is a family member of, someone who works in one of these capacities. Additionally, the threat must be made as a result of actions taken by the victim in conjunction with his or her assigned work responsibilities.

SB 24 was introduced at the request of the Wisconsin Juvenile Court Intake Association (WJCIA). I've attached past communications from the association and from other employees affected by the bill to provide you with background regarding the threats these workers encounter as they do their jobs.

The WJCIA has been seeking recourse for several years to ensure threats to the group's members and similar professionals are dealt with appropriately. These employees deal with matters that are volatile by nature, including the potential removal of a child or juvenile from his or her home. It is not unusual for sensitive situations to lead to threats of bodily harm against an employee and/or his or her family and, however much fear these threats may generate, the perpetrators usually suffer few, if any, consequences. For example, a Child Protective Services worker in Marinette County was threatened last year by a mother who said she would shoot the employee if any attempts were made to remove a child from the home. This threat was brought to the attention of law enforcement, but the matter was not pursued further because the district attorney said that office would not prosecute the mother for disorderly conduct, the only possible charge under current law. Consequently, the Wisconsin Juvenile Court Intake Association believes social service-type employees who work with children need specific, statutory protection.

You may be aware that state law already provides penalties for threats against judges, witnesses, and employees of the departments of Revenue, Commerce and Workforce Development. In fact, violators in these cases face a Class H felony charge. Due to concerns about the potential impact on the prison population, SB 24 only allows for a Class A misdemeanor charge, but this law would provide a degree of protection that is essentially non-existent at this time for juvenile intake workers, school employees, child support employees and social service employees. Similar legislation has been introduced in the past by Rep. Bob Ziegelbauer, who continues to support the bill as an Assembly cosponsor, and by former Sen. Gary Drzewiecki.

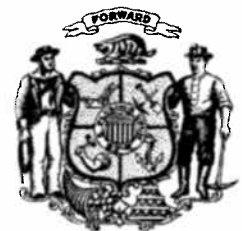
This bill is supported by the Wisconsin Juvenile Court Intake Association, the Wisconsin Child Support Enforcement Association, the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development and others.

Individuals who work to protect children should not be afraid to do their jobs because of threats of harm by family members or other involved parties. SB 24 provides a legal mechanism to address those instances where such threats do occur. We hope the committee will move quickly to close this gap in the law to provide greater security to these employees.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation.



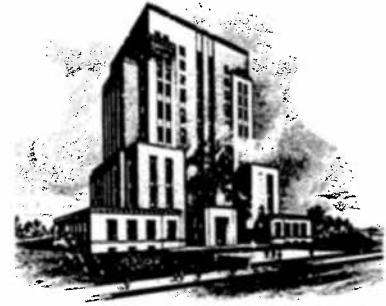
WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



Racine County Child Support Department

411 7th Street, Suite 102
Racine, Wisconsin 53403-1256
Phone (262) 636-3493
Fax (262) 636-3156

Jonathan F. Lehman
Director



RACINE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

MEMORANDUM

TO: SENATOR DAVID ZIEN, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, CORRECTIONS & PRIVACY; MEMBERS: SENATOR ROESSLER, SENATOR COGGS AND SENATOR TAYLOR
FROM: JONATHAN F. LEHMAN
DATE: FEBRUARY 23, 2005
RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF 2005 SENATE BILL 24

I would like to thank the committee for their time and consideration of this very important piece of legislation. I would also like to publicly thank Senator Ron Brown for his time and energy on this bill during the last session and the amendment to include the child support workers around the state.

I represent Racine County Executive William McReynolds and a Child Support Department with the third largest caseload and the highest collection of child support per FTE in the State of Wisconsin. My support of this bill comes from nearly ten years in this program and countless experiences involving parties to a case, in our office and in the courtrooms, that would be considered volatile, hostile and threatening. The range of negative behavior is broad and varies from the sublime to the ridiculous, spanning gender, race and age.

The focus of my testimony will be not to specific anecdote but rather to the cost that has been born by Racine County and the program to create a safe work environment for our reception staff and caseworkers.

Shortly after leasing space in a new building to accommodate the program in 1996, we discovered that our open reception and waiting area was inadequate to deal with the participant

To Serve the Parents and Children of Racine County through a Cooperative Partnership of Understanding, Compassion and Support.

PAGE TWO
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, CORRECTIONS & PRIVACY
FEBRUARY 23, 2005

that could not be satisfied and was unwilling to discontinue their personal advocacy, whether they came off of the street or came from the courthouse. The continual breach of security caused the redesign and construction of separate reception and waiting rooms. We also subsequently reconfigured our six-appointment/interview rooms to include panic buttons. We instituted and practice a procedure to provide assistance to workers in these secluded areas.

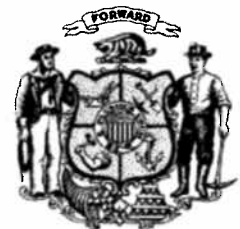
After nearly nine years in our current facility, we are planning a move to a newly designed lease space. The primary focus during six months of planning and design of our new facility revolved around the issue of staff security. To achieve this, additional costs were directed at keeping the staff as separated from the participants as possible, in the reception and waiting room, interview rooms and parking lot. While this need to protect is driven by the very small percentage of cases and isolated negative behavior, it is a reality that has the potential of occurring on a daily basis.

I believe SB 24, like the ~~more~~ ^{much} ~~celebrity~~ ^{intel} Federal Homeland Security Act, should be viewed not as a panacea, rather as a single tool in the overall mission to assure a more safe and secure community. While we cannot and will not expect that the threats of violence directed at my staff by participants in our caseload will go away or even diminish, we can expect a more genuine response from local law enforcement and perhaps a closer scrutiny by the District Attorney's Office when the incident occurs. In ways that may be difficult to measure, SB 24 may create a behavior modifier that would deter some acts from some parties that carry fewer risk factors.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this valuable legislation and the opportunity to share my thoughts. You have my enduring thanks and best wishes for your own continued success.



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



WISCONSIN CHILD

SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT ASSOCIATION

Memorandum

TO : Senate Committee on Judiciary, Corrections and Privacy

FROM : Janet Nelson, Chief Legal Counsel, Milwaukee County Department of Child Support Enforcement, and Legislative Committee Chair, Wisconsin Child Support Enforcement Association

DATE : February 23, 2005

SUBJECT : Support for Senate Bill 24, relating to threats against child support workers

The Wisconsin Child Support Enforcement Association represents Wisconsin's county and tribal child support agencies. These public agencies establish paternity and establish and enforce child support orders for Wisconsin's families. The Milwaukee County Department of Child Support Enforcement is one of these agencies, and works with the Association to support legislation that allows our workers to provide the best service possible to the families who rely on our support collection efforts.

Support workers frequently see citizens at their worst – when they are involved in the emotional upheaval of separation, divorce or paternity proceedings. Unfortunately, collecting support money from individuals in these circumstances sometimes subjects workers to verbal threats of physical harm. In Milwaukee County, we receive a threat by telephone, in office meetings with caseworkers, in court or by mail a couple of times per year.

In preparing this memorandum, I reviewed a tape of threats made in 2003 by an individual upset about his support order. He called several workers within my department and left messages for each of them. In the messages, he references the shooting of a deputy in Waukesha County during the 1990's. He says he knows how to bring gasoline and matches through the security checkpoints in the Milwaukee County Courthouse and how to find where individual child support workers live by checking ownership records in the Register of Deeds.

The District Attorney charged this person under Chapter 947, Crimes Against Public Peace, Order and Other Interests. The specific charge was disorderly conduct under §947.01, a Class B misdemeanor with a penalty of up to \$1,000 in fines, imprisonment up to 90 days, or both. (An arrest warrant has been issued for this person, he has yet to be picked up.)

SB 24 creates a specific crime under Chapter 940 – Crimes Against Life and Bodily Security, for threatening child support and other public workers. Such threats constitute Class A misdemeanors, with a penalty up to \$10,000 in fines, imprisonment up to 9 months, or both. A disorderly conduct charge for threats as personal and malicious in nature as the ones I heard on the 2003 tape is inadequate. SB 24 makes it clear to child support system participants that this type of intimidation is not acceptable.

This bill joins prior legislative initiatives in Chapter 940 protecting state employees in the departments of revenue, commerce and workforce development. It is interesting to note that the earlier statutes, §940.205 and §940.207, make it a Class H felony to threaten state workers in DOR, DWD and Commerce, while threatening the workers listed in SB 24 is only a Class A misdemeanor. The difference in potential penalties is significant, as the penalty for a Class H felony is a fine not to exceed \$10,000 or imprisonment not to exceed 6 years, or both. I suggest that the committee address this discrepancy.

I urge you, on behalf of the WCSEA and Milwaukee County Department of Child Support Enforcement, to support this legislation protecting child support and other public employees from unwarranted and counterproductive intimidation.

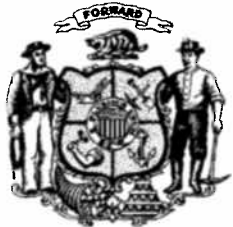
Thank you for your time and attention.

Janet Nelson
Chief Legal Counsel
Milwaukee County
Department of Child Support Enforcement
901 N. 9th Street
Milwaukee WI 53233

Telephone: (414) 278-5269
E-mail: jnelson@milwcnty.com



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



Jefferson County
Child Support Enforcement

Courthouse, Jefferson, WI 53549

Telephone: (920) 674-7255

Elaine E. Richmond, Director

To: Senate Committee on Judiciary, Corrections and Privacy

Re: Senate Bill 24

Date: February 23, 2005

Chair: Senator Zien, Committee members: Senator Roessler, Senator Grothman, Senator Coggs, and Senator Taylor:


Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 24. Child support workers across the state are hoping that the legislature will see fit to provide some protection for them against persons who threaten us in varying ways and degrees because they mistake the messenger for the message.

I work in a smaller office with a staff of 14 persons. One or another of us have been physically threatened in our office, followed in our cars, or threatened bodily harm over the telephone. Every day our customer service coordinator sits behind a glass that is not bullet proof and hopes this is not the day that someone's anger and frustration spills over into violence in front of her.

We have emergency call buttons under our desks and the cooperation of our sheriff's department to send a bailiff to hearings for parties who are known threats. We can sign a disorderly conduct complaint against persons causing a major disturbance in our offices. What we cannot do is be assured that there is any serious consequence if a worker is physically harmed or harassed to the point of disability.

I have heard from many of our county agencies with stories they would like to share today but they cannot come to Madison to tell you. So I have attached a number of them to this written testimony and ask you to read the rest later in the interest of not abusing the opportunity to speak to you today.

On behalf of all of the child support workers in Wisconsin, I urge you to support Senate Bill 24.


By: Elaine E. Richmond
Legislative Committee, WCSEA



Child Support....You owe it to your kids!

Elaine Richmond

From: Beverly Patterson [beverly.patterson@co.ashland.wi.us]
Sent: Tuesday, February 22, 2005 1:22 PM
To: Elaine Richmond
Subject: Re: Threats to Social Workers/Child Support Workers/Attorneys Bill

I don't know if Jeff is coming. When I was in Kenosha, we had a manager of the order revision project who was sent a letter by one of the payers we were trying to increase an order on, telling him that he knows where he lives and knows where his children go to school. I believe one or two of our sheriff's deputies had a talk with the guy. We had a letter sent to fiscal staff (at that time in the Clerk of Courts office) saying (another payer) that he could understand why "some of you people get shot and killed". He lived out of state and the FBI got involved in that one, went to his home (where he did have guns) and warned him. Then, of course, we had a social worker in the children's unit who was murdered by a mother and two of her male friends (one was her husband at a point in time, another was a security guard in the building I worked in) over the rescheduling of her supervised visitation due to the illness of the social worker. They went to her home and raped and murdered her (over a delay in her visitation). The social workers lived in fear for years before the murderers were caught and convicted. The former CSA director here had his house burned down (but that turned out to be to cover the theft of his gun collection, and there were other issues involved than just that he was the CS director [offender was an NCP, but also godfather to director's child]). As child support workers we are constantly put into the middle of very volatile relationship issues of parties who are divorcing or separating and battling over property, money, and children. We have been given tougher than ever enforcement tools, including freezing and seizing people's bank accounts, removing hunting, fishing, driving and professional license privileges, and these do not meet with friendly responses.

From: BBethel@co.langlade.wi.us
Sent: Monday, February 21, 2005 4:15 PM
To: Elaine Richmond
Subject: RE: Threats to Social Workers/Child Support Workers/Attorneys Bill

We have had an NCP bring a gun into the Courthouse. He was chased down by law enforcement and incarcerated. The gun was loaded. We have also had an NCP wear a knife into the Courthouse. We have called law enforcement on several occasions when customers were being threatening.

We now have bulletproof glass that separates our waiting area from our receptionist. We will be considering a metal detector in the future.

Bonnie Bethel, Director
Langlade County Child Support

Elaine Richmond

From: Ramaker, Patricia [p.ramaker@JOBCENTER.ORG]
Sent: Tuesday, February 22, 2005 8:50 AM
To: Elaine Richmond
Subject: RE: Threats to Social Workers/Child Support Workers/Attorneys Bill

Elaine:

Although I will not be in attendance, I have a couple of stories to provide:

Several years ago, our local sheriff's department was dispatched to a local well-known farmer in the area to serve a commitment warrant on his daughter's boyfriend, who was the subject of one of our actions. While attempting to do so, this farmer became enraged that the local authorities would even think to come upon his property to serve one of his own. He then threatened law authorities with a pitchfork, and actually charged one of them. It took three officers to control the situation. The following day, this same farmer came into my office, which is located next door to the District Attorney's office, and before I knew what was happening, had me backed up against the wall, stating that no little girl was going to serve a warrant on his family, and who did I think I was to do such a thing. He then stated, "You better watch out, people read about things that happen to people like you in the newspaper the next day". Then he walked out. As we had no security at the time, I just sat at my desk, stunned. There happened to be a police officer in the DA's office, who heard all of this. But no action was ever taken, as this is a well-known large farmer, and no one wanted to ruffle his feathers.

If this ever happened again, I would insist that charges be filed.

Another incident: a man came into my office, drunk, very upset that his tax returns had been intercepted to pay for back child support. I informed him that it was not my case, that it was another county's actions, but he insisted it was my office. He also came around my desk, and I was forced to back my chair up to the wall. I reported this incident to our County Clerk, who was also our personnel director at the time, who stated we are here to serve the public, and even though the public may be drunk and abusive, that is what we are here for.

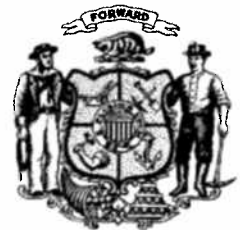
So I believe that these incidents also should support the bill inasmuch as we are not even really protected by the persons who employ us. Yes, we are here to serve the public, but we are not here to be abused by the public. If either of these matters had happened in the private sector, you can be assured that charges would have been filed and these persons would have had to account for their actions.

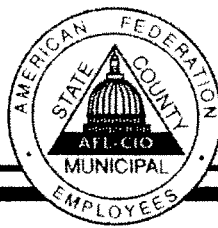
Thank you for your service to the child support community by appearing on our behalf. Good luck.

Patricia Ramaker, Administrator
Lafayette County Child Support Agency



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Tuesday, October 25, 2005

To: All Senators

From: Susan McMurray, Legislative Representative for AFSCME

Re: SB 24, threats to social workers and others

AFSCME supports SB 24, which would create a penalty for anyone who threatens to harm social workers, juvenile intake workers or school employees. These public employees have stressful jobs and, on occasion, are threatened by clients and others. SB 24 would help these workers feel a bit safer in their jobs.

We ask you to support this legislation.

John Grabel and I will be available today to answer any questions you might have. Feel free also to call me at 279-9697.

Thank you.