

☛ 11hr\_SC-Ed\_ab0215\_pt01



(FORM UPDATED: 08/11/2010)

## WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ... PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS

### 2011-12

(session year)

### Senate

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

### Committee on Education...

#### COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

- Committee Reports ... **CR**
- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
- Public Hearings ... **PH**

#### INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

- Appointments ... **Appt** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Clearinghouse Rules ... **CRule** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- 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) (December 2012)



Registrations Against

- None.

Registrations for Information Only

- None.

November 16, 2011 **EXECUTIVE SESSION HELD**

Present: (9) Representatives Kestell, Marklein, Nass,  
Pridemore, Thiesfeldt, Wynn, Sinicki, Hintz  
and Clark.  
Absent: (0) None.  
Excused: (2) Representatives Knudson and Pope-Roberts.

Moved by Representative Pridemore, seconded by Representative  
Clark that **Assembly Amendment 1** be recommended for  
adoption.

Ayes: (8) Representatives Kestell, Marklein,  
Pridemore, Thiesfeldt, Wynn, Sinicki, Hintz  
and Clark.  
Noes: (1) Representative Nass.  
Absent: (2) Representatives Knudson and Pope-Roberts.

**ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT 1 ADOPTION RECOMMENDED,**  
Ayes 8, Noes 1

Moved by Representative Clark, seconded by Representative  
Sinicki that **Assembly Bill 215** be recommended for passage as  
amended.

Ayes: (8) Representatives Kestell, Marklein,  
Pridemore, Thiesfeldt, Wynn, Sinicki, Hintz  
and Clark.  
Noes: (1) Representative Nass.  
Absent: (2) Representatives Knudson and Pope-Roberts.

**PASSAGE AS AMENDED RECOMMENDED,** Ayes 8, Noes 1

---

Chris Kulow  
Committee Clerk

Testimony for Assembly Bill 215 – SuAnne Rieckman – 1228 W. Cottonwood Ct., Appleton

I am here today to ask for your support of Assembly Bill 215. This bill was born from an event that affected me personally: On Monday, May 3, 2010 I was contacted at work and told I needed to come to my children's place of care to pick them up. At that time, my son, Gus, was 3, and my daughter, Adah, was only 9 months old. I asked what was going on, but was only told, again, that I just needed to come to get my kids. When I arrived to pick them up, my children were handed to me and there were several other parents there to pick up their children. There was a fire marshal sitting in the living room. The scene was chaotic. I inquired, once more, as to what was happening and was told that they would call me later. Relieved just to see that my children were alright, I was happy to take them home where I knew they were safe.

The phone call they promised never came. Despite multiple attempts to contact the daycare owners, there was never a returned phone call. I didn't get a call from any agency - fire or police department - either. I knew deep down that something had been very wrong, so I began investigating myself. I finally talked to police officials and the fire marshal that had been at the daycare on the day they closed. The fire marshal informed me that on May 3, when he went into the home, there were too many children in the residence for the square footage of the home. I had suspected that might be the problem. What he said next, however, was something I would never have suspected: he found several children in the basement. My heart sank, and I began to sob. Up to that point I had not told him the names of my children, so I said, "My kids names are Gus and Adah Rieckman. Were either of them in the basement?" He apologized and said that he couldn't reveal names at that point, but there would be a social worker calling with additional information. Days later the call I was dreading came: Adah had been one of several babies that was left alone in the basement. The police report indicated that there was not even a baby monitor down there for anyone to hear if the children needed help.

Over the next few days I went through so many emotions: anger – at both the adults caring for my children, and at myself. *I should have asked more questions. I should have done a surprise walk-through of the house.* I blamed myself. I was mostly so sad. I cried as I put my Adah in her crib at night, thinking *she probably hates being left alone in the dark. Who knows how many long hours she spent down in that basement by herself-crying with no one to hear her.* Several mysteries began to make sense: Adah had a chronically runny nose from 3-9 months of age. It stopped within days of her being away from the daycare. After talking to her doctor, we determined it had to be the cold, musty, moldy basement had created her respiratory issues. I had also always wondered why it took her so long to sleep through the night. Shortly after leaving that daycare center, she began to have a regular sleep pattern; probably because she was kept in the dark basement of her daycare for such long periods during the day.

These pictures are only a few of those taken of the basement conditions by the fire department when they entered the daycare. Knowing my baby had been kept in a basement for most of the day ordinarily would be bad enough. But as you can see in these photos, there was a hoarding-like situation in the basement as well, with only a small, meandering path leading to the back room where my little Adah spent most of her days.



The room behind the door is where they found my baby, Adah, along with several other children.



Was a child actually sleeping there?



The fire department noted that there were toys and other items piled around the furnace. A certain fire hazard.



Adah was in one of these cribs. The *What if?* Questions are what drives me to ensure this never happens to another child.

Please note that these are NOT the conditions I saw. I was always welcomed with a smile into the extremely clean, pleasant home that they presented, all of which was a lie.

After all that had happened – reading the police report, seeing the pictures, finding out about the many lies and cover-ups the daycare workers had done in order to have that many children in the home without having parents suspect anything - what I was most shocked by was the fact that the police were not able to file any charges. The reason? **The daycare center had filed paperwork with the DPI to become a private school, therefore making them exempt from any regulations on childcare centers.** There had actually been several visits to the home from the Department of Children and Families to check on the facility after some parents had raised suspicions about the daycare. Each time they came, however, the owner would flash a form from the DPI in her face and tell her she was not allowed to enter because they were a private school. I had never signed my children up for a private school and had never intended for them to be in anything more than a daycare setting. The owners never told me that they had registered as a private school, therefore waving any regulations that other daycare centers have. I felt helpless, knowing that my children had suffered, and that there would be no consequences for any of the adults at that daycare.

I know that there are many in-home daycares that are loving, caring places. I also respect a private school's right to educate children in their own way and know that most are dedicated to giving children a good education. I know that Bill 215 is aimed at a very few people who have learned to abuse our system for their own gain. But then I think about how many children may be affected by these few places. In our situation alone the police report sites 19 children found in the home, but also sites there were an unknown number shuffled off to the house next door to hide. That's in one center alone!

I felt anger and disappointment toward the way our particular situation concluded. But after everything was said and done, I knew the outcome was much better than it could have been. If there had been a fire, or if some of those boxes had fallen on Adah, the outcome would have been unthinkable. In the end my children were safe and sound, and I began to think of other children that could be in the same situation. I knew the only way to bring about some resolution and peace to our situation was to make sure it never happened to others. The only way to do that is to change the law. This opportunity is now before you.

As far as I could learn, my son wasn't ever put in the basement. Why? He could talk. They were actually choosing young children that had no voice. They couldn't speak up and tell their parents what was going on. They couldn't ask for help. Bill 215 is aimed at speaking on behalf of those children. You are their voice. You can protect them. You can prevent our situation from happening to others. Please vote in favor of Bill 215.