



JERRY PETROWSKI

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Testimony on AB 175/ SB 160: training standards for law enforcement officers regarding domestic abuse incidents and complaints, and law enforcement reports following a domestic abuse incident

Mr. Chairman, members, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the proposed changes made by Senate Bill 160. Today I will be testifying on a substitute amendment I have introduced that satisfies both the law enforcement and the domestic violence victim advocates. The Department of Justice raised some valid concerns regarding the original language of the bill and how it would affect law enforcement. The overall intent of the substitute amendment is the same. The substitute amendment enhances law enforcements ability not only to track and respond to domestic violence incidents, but also connects victims to services more effectively.

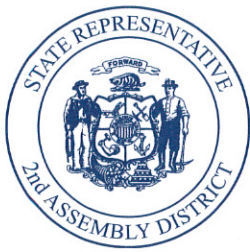
Like the original bill, this substitute amendment clarifies that law enforcement agencies can share information with victim service providers. In current law it is unclear whether the legislative intent of these statutes allows for this type of information sharing. Making it easier for law enforcement to connect victims to victim services is crucial in protecting our vulnerable citizens.

Additionally, this amendment improves DOJ's ability to track and report domestic violence incidents by giving DOJ access to the PROTECT system. The PROTECT system is a case management system used by district attorneys around the state. DOJ is statutorily required to put out an annual domestic abuse incident report. While the intent of this report is positive, the information available to DOJ under the statutes does not provide a complete picture of statewide domestic violence incidents. This bill allows district attorney offices the ability to send and receive information from the courts and law enforcement agencies and to send information to the Department of Justice's Crime Information Bureau. DOJ does not currently have general access to this system.

Finally, this bill clarifies that law enforcement departments must have a policy of informing victims of domestic violence of shelters and services in his or her community and make them aware of their legal options, including a domestic abuse injunction or harassment injunction.

Thank you again for hearing this bill and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Transportation, Public Safety & Veterans and Military Affairs

FROM: Representative André Jacque

DATE: February 12, 2014

RE: Assembly Bill 175 / Senate Bill 160

Dear Committee Members:

Thank you for your consideration today of Assembly Bill 175 and its companion, Senate Bill 160, which would improve awareness and the sharing of information regarding domestic violence resources with both victims of domestic abuse and the various layers of law enforcement. This legislation passed the State Assembly last year on a voice vote after receiving broad bi-partisan co-sponsorship and a unanimous recommendation by committee.

While the proposed substitute amendment reduces the scope of the bill, it is nonetheless an important step forward by ensuring the communication of assistance available to victims to and by law enforcement, clarifying the existing ability of law enforcement to communicate with and refer to domestic violence victim shelters and service agencies so that they may assist the abused, and requiring a procedure for response to domestic disturbances by law enforcement that includes communication of resources to victims. Research shows these services are effective in keeping victims safe and making it more likely victims can successfully help bring violent offenders to justice.

Thank you again for your time and for your consideration of Assembly Bill 175.

testimony



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To: Members of the Senate Committee on Public Safety
From: Tony Gibart, Public Policy Coordinator,
Date: February 12, 2013
Re: Support for Assembly Bill 175 and Senate Bill 160

Chairman Petrowski, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony today. My name is Tony Gibart, and I represent the End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin. End Abuse is the statewide membership organization that is the voice for survivors of domestic violence and local domestic violence victim service providers. We strongly support Assembly Bill 175 and Senate Bill 160, and thank Sen. Petrowski and Rep. Jacque for bringing it forward. The bill ensures that responding officers will refer victims to local services and resources for shelter and support and takes other steps to encourage critical cooperation between law enforcement and victim service providers.

SB 160 and AB 175 will strengthen the connection between law enforcement and local services for victims by requiring officers to provide victims with information about services in their area. This requirement reflects the fact that the criminal justice system cannot address domestic violence alone; a more comprehensive strategy for both victims and perpetrators is needed. Moreover, research shows that working with a victim advocate both increases the chances a victim will feel safe enough to participate in the criminal justice system and will successfully escape abuse. The bill also clarifies that the crime victim rights laws do not prevent law enforcement from connecting victims to services.

The bill also will provide better data to the Department of Justice (DOJ) so that DOJ can offer more accurate statistics and analysis regarding law enforcement responses to domestic abuse. Currently, DOJ is statutorily required to complete the Wisconsin Domestic Abuse Incident Report each year; however, limitations in the data prevent us from gaining a clear picture of the total number of reports of domestic abuse in Wisconsin and the nature and quality of outcomes in these cases. We hope that better information and data can inform training and public policy initiatives in the future.

Thank you again for considering my testimony. Again, I urge you to support this legislation. I would be happy to answer any questions. I can be reached at tony@wcadv.org or 608.255.0539 x 310.