



# TREIG E. PRONSCHINSKE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 92<sup>nd</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**Testimony on Assembly Bill 776  
Assembly Committee on Children and Families  
January 17, 2018**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Assembly Bill 776.

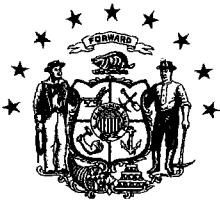
Representative Doyle and I have authored this proposal as part of the effort to make positive changes to the foster care system. This bill was inspired by the comments we heard from the folks in Buffalo County during the Speaker's Task Force on Foster Care hearing in La Crosse last year. The request we heard was for help with making it possible to transfer validly licensed foster homes to another licensing authority.

Further, this bill will allow counties to license foster homes in other counties, rather than just on a per child basis and strengthens a licensing authority's ability to revoke a foster home license.

These changes will help counties to share resources and increase the number of available homes at a time when they are so desperately needed.

Constituents from Buffalo and Trempealeau Counties will testify to how this bill would work in their foster care programs.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this proposal.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
**STEVE DOYLE**

WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY

94<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

TO: Chairman Kitchens and Members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families

FROM: Rep. Steve Doyle

DATE: January 17, 2018

SUBJECT: Testimony in support of AB 776

Thank you for holding a public hearing on AB 776. As one of the Co-Chairs of the Speaker's Task Force on Foster Care, I am proud to support this bill and to support the Foster Forward legislative package. This bill makes two technical changes that will improve the licensing process.

The first part creates a process to transfer the license of a foster home if the county or child protection agency is no longer a valid licensing agency. This could happen if an agency goes out of business or if DCF chooses not to allow them to issue licenses anymore. Regardless, under current law, these licenses cannot be transferred so another agency would have to quickly re-license the family in order for them to remain foster parents. This can cause a gap in the license or even discourage a family from fostering because they have to go through the paperwork again. Under this bill, an already licensed foster family would not have to reapply – instead, their license would be transferred to the next applicable agency. This measure was drafted at the suggestion of DCF to allow agencies to create a planned changeover for the foster care licensee and any children in their home.

The second portion of this bill came from Buffalo County when they testified at our public hearing in La Crosse. Their concern related to counties licensing foster homes in other counties. Currently, county A could license a home in county B – as long as county B consents. However, this license is child specific and expires when the child leaves the home. This bill changes that license to be a general license so that the foster home would not need to be relicensed if they want to take another placement after their first child leaves. Both county A and county B would still need to have an agreement in order for out-of-county licensing to occur. The aim of this bill is not to let one county steal another's foster homes – rather, it is designed to help on-going agreements between counties continue to serve children in need.

AB 776 was crafted with the input of DCF and the Wisconsin Counties Human Service Association (WCHSA) and I am sure they will be happy to answer any technical questions you may have.

Again, thank you for taking the time to hear this bill and I hope that you will support it.

# Alberta Darling

## Wisconsin State Senator

Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Finance

Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Children and Families  
Assembly Bill 776

Thank you Chair Kitchens and committee members for holding a hearing on Assembly Bill 776. The bill in front of you removes statutory barriers for foster families to keep their licenses.

Strong foster families are absolutely crucial to the health and well-being of the approximately 7,000 Wisconsin kids living in out-of-home care. Foster families provide a semblance of support, home, and family, in the face of the trauma that youth in our child welfare system have undergone. Foster families must be licensed by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), a county department, or a child welfare agency that is licensed by DCF.

Under current law, foster care licenses cannot be transferred between counties or agencies under any circumstance. Due to this law, if a licensing agency closes, a foster family will also lose their license, unless another agency can quickly re-license the family before the gap in licensure can occur. This system places an entirely unnecessary barrier on foster families who have already been licensed. Assembly Bill 776 reforms this system to create a continuity process for licensed foster parents when the county or welfare agency who licensed them is no longer able to issue licenses. Under the bill, if an agency is no longer able to provide licenses, a foster family's license will transfer to the next applicable agency.

The second key change the bill makes is to allow for specific instances of cross-county licensure. Currently, a county may license a home outside their jurisdiction with the consent of the host county. However, that license is child specific and expires when the child leaves the home. Assembly Bill 776 expands this program to include more instances for cross-county licensure, so long as both counties consent to the licensing.

Assembly Bill 776 makes technical changes to improve the licensing process for foster families. Both of the changes in Assembly Bill 776 will remove barriers for foster families who have already been licensed. Keeping strong foster families in our state is vital for helping our foster youth.

I'd like to thank Representatives Pronschinske and Doyle for their work on this bill. I urge your support on Assembly Bill 776.



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Governor Scott Walker  
Secretary Eloise Anderson

Secretary's Office

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Date: January 17, 2018  
To: Members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families  
From: Lonna Morouney, Legislative Liaison  
Fredri Bove, Administrator, Division of Safety and Permanence  
Jonelle Brom, Section Chief, Out-of-Home-Care Section  
Re: 2017 Assembly Bill 776

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Chairman Kitchens and Members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 776, one of the recommended legislative proposals from the Speaker's Task Force on Foster Care. My name is Lonna Morouney and I am the Legislative Liaison for the Department of Children and Families. I am accompanied by Fredri Bove, Administrator for the Division of Safety and Permanence, and Jonelle Brom, Section Chief for the Out-of-Home Care Section.

Assembly Bill 776 makes two changes to foster parent licensing in order to improve stability and continuity of foster care placements:

- Under current law, if a child placing agency is no longer able to license foster homes for reasons such as an agency closure or revocation or suspension, foster parents must start the licensing process over from the beginning with a new child placing agency. The bill would allow the foster parent license to transfer to a different child placing agency without a gap in licensure. The Department most often sees this licensure gap and process duplication when a private child placing agency goes out of businesses.
- The second change under the bill relates to out-of-county foster parent licensing. Under current law, counties may license a foster home in a different county but only for a specific child. The bill allows for the license in the different county to be a general license if both counties agree and if the counties are contiguous.

Both provisions support foster parents by providing greater certainty and continuity for foster parents and the children placed in their homes. Foster parents play a critical role in providing caring homes for children in need. This bill avoids imposing on foster parents needless disruption in the continuity of their children's care and additional administrative workload burden under specific circumstances.

The Department sincerely thanks the authors of the bill, and the entire Task Force for their commitment to improving the foster care system in Wisconsin.

We are pleased to answer any questions you may have.