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Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs

Senator André Jacque

April 29, 2021

Chairman Skowronski and Members of the Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs,

Thank you for holding this hearing and the opportunity to testify before you in support of Assembly Bill 103, the Uniform Deployed Parents Custody and Visitation Act, whose language was previously recommended by the 2018 Legislative Council Study Committee on Child Placement and Support. The Assembly author of this legislation, Rep. Brooks, chaired that study committee and I am happy to join him in re-introducing it for your consideration, as it passed the full State Assembly late last session and passed out of committee unanimously in the State Senate, but was not taken up before the session adjourned.

Assembly Bill 103 is a piece of Uniform Law Commission legislation which has already been enacted in 14 states. It creates a process and standards for temporary delegation of custodial responsibilities when a parent is deployed in military or national service. During deployment, that parent may grant his or her custodial responsibilities or visitation to stepparents, grandparents, great-grandparents, or adults who have a parent-like relationship with the child. The bill also establishes a timeframe for termination of these temporary custodial responsibilities when the deployed parent returns. The timeframe depends on the length of deployment.

Temporary custody and placement arrangements are often challenging for military families during deployment, and this legislation would help give these families a sense of certainty during deployment.

AB 103 is identical to 2019 Assembly Bill 93, which as I mentioned originated in the Legislative Council Study Committee on Child Placement and Support and passed the Assembly on a voice vote. The senate companion bill to this legislation has already passed the Senate Human Services, Children and Families Committee unanimously, and the full State Senate on a voice vote. I am also pleased that the Wisconsin American Legion supports this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration of Assembly Bill 103.



ROBERT BROOKS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 60TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs
Thursday, April 29, 2021

Thank you for holding a hearing on Assembly Bill 103 and allowing me to testify in favor of this legislation.

This bill originated in the Study Committee on Child Placement and Support, which I chaired.

The committee was tasked with reviewing current standards for determining physical placement and child support obligations.

The committee was composed of five legislators and eight public members, including a judge, court commissioner, private family law attorney, domestic violence advocate, fathers' rights activists, and county child support agency directors.

The diverse membership of the committee allowed us to hear from multiple stakeholders. It was important for us to receive feedback from both practitioners and parents that would be directly impacted by policy change – both of which were represented on the committee.

Last session, this bill passed via voice vote in the Assembly and received unanimous support during the Senate committee process. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, it was not scheduled for a full Senate vote.

Assembly Bill 103 is a piece of Uniform Law Commission legislation, which is already law in fourteen states. It establishes a process and standards for temporary delegation of custodial responsibilities when a parent is deployed in military or national service. During deployment, that parent may grant his or her custodial responsibilities or visitation to stepparents, grandparents, great-grandparents, or adults who have a parent-like relationship with the child. The bill also establishes a timeframe for termination of these temporary custodial responsibilities when the deployed parent returns. The timeframe is incumbent upon the length of deployment.

The study committee heard testimony that temporary custody and placement arrangements are challenging for military families during deployment. This bill would help give these families a sense of certainty during deployment.

Thank you for your time and attention and I ask that you support this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions.