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TO: Assembly Committee on Education

FROM: Rep. Scott Krug

RE: 2021 ASSEMBLY BILL 222

DATE: February 1, 2022

I write today to thank the committee and Chair Rep. Thiesfeldt for holding this hearing on AB 222, and to express my support for the bill.

AB 222 requires school authorities to post in a conspicuous location in a public area of each school building, a sign that contains the telephone number for the local county or state agency that is responsible for receiving reports of, and conducting investigations regarding, child abuse or neglect. The bill applies to school boards, operators of independent charter schools, and to the governing bodies of a private school participating in a parental choice program or in the Special Needs Scholarship Program.

We all wish that there were no need to assist in the reporting of child abuse. However, the need is plainly present. The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families reports that in 2020, Wisconsin saw 4,426 substantiated allegations of child neglect in the state; there were 3,985 unique child victims of maltreatment in 2020. Abuse can take many forms, all of them harmful; we need to do what we can to make sure help is available. AB 222 will help accomplish this.

Children look to schools for support in their lives, especially when their home lives are imperfect; and posting contact information for abuse reporting may assist a child in need of help, to get that help. It's a step worth taking. These posters could be a critical reminder to our children that there are teachers, friends and neighbors that are ready to help continue moving their future forward.

We do, of course, already make strong efforts to prevent and address abuse. School are required to offer training in detecting abuse and to report it when necessary. The Department of Public Instruction conducts a number of efforts and initiatives to address abuse and I am certain that they will be summarizing these for you in their own statement.

MORE

In written testimony on SB 238, the companion bill to AB 222, the Wisconsin Department Public Instruction said that “(this bill) will build on existing efforts to better protect children by increasing awareness of the hotline, another place people can turn to for help, in schools.”

AB 222 is supported by the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin. SB 238 is supported by the League as well, and is also supported by SaintA (aka St. Aemilian-Lakeside in Milwaukee, a private, not-for-profit, non-sectarian residential treatment center for boys).

No opposition has been noted to AB 222 or to the companion bill, SB 238.

There is a fiscal note on AB 22 and SB 238 prepared by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, which tells us that the fiscal effect is “negligible” or nonexistent.

The companion to AB 222, SB 238, has been heard by the Senate Committee on Education, which recommended the bill for passage on a vote of 6-1. The State Senate later passed SB 238 on a voice vote in May 2021.

I ask for your support of Assembly Bill 222 and thank you for your consideration.



ANDRÉ JACQUE

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*Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Education
State Senator André Jacque
February 1, 2022*

Chairman Thiesfeldt and Members of the Assembly Committee on Education,

Thank you for holding this hearing and the opportunity to testify before you today in support of Assembly Bill 222 and Senate Bill 238, posting the child abuse and neglect reporting hotline in school buildings.

Children are the future of Wisconsin. In instances of abuse or neglect, children should have the resources to protect themselves when the adults in their lives do not.

Assembly Bill 222 and Senate Bill 238 require a school board, the operator of an independent charter school, the governing body of a private school participating in a parental choice program or in the Special Needs Scholarship Program to post in a conspicuous public location in each school building a sign that contains the telephone number for the local county or state agency that is responsible for receiving reports of, and conducting investigations regarding, child abuse or neglect. A sample of what such a poster could look like from the Child Advocacy Center, based on what is in use in other states, can be found at the end of my testimony. The message is clear, positive, easy to comprehend and appropriate for all ages, and schools can download and print it at no cost.

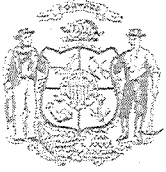
Requiring schools to post a child abuse hotline number where students frequent is a helpful mechanism to accomplish 4 goals:

1. It gives students the knowledge they are valued.
2. It gives students the knowledge they have the right and power to self-report abuse.
3. It gives students the mechanism to report abuse while in the safe environment of the school, without having to look an adult in the eye to make the initial report.
4. It puts predators on notice (A significant percentage of the children who are abused are abused by older more powerful children/students).

According to the Center for Child Advocacy:

- The median age of a child who is sexually abused is 9 years old.
- 60% of women who are incarcerated had been sexually abused.
- 45% of pregnant teens report a history of sexual abuse.
- Drug and Alcohol dependency-70% preceded by sexual abuse.
- Sexually transmitted diseases-60% preceded by sexual abuse.

The National Conference of State Legislators wrote a brief in support of this legislation in January 2015, calling it a concrete, simple and inexpensive way for school children to seek help in a safe environment.



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There are 43 states that have the child abuse hotline number in schools. This proposal has received the formal support of Wisconsin's Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, enjoys bi-partisan co-sponsorship, was voted out of the Senate Education committee with broad bi-partisan support, and has passed the full Senate on a voice vote.

Thank you for your consideration of Assembly Bill 222 and Senate Bill 238.

IT'S OK TO TELL!

If someone hurts you:

Say

NO

 like you mean it

GO

to a safe place

TELL

a trusted adult



Call **1-800-252-5400**

for help or **911** for emergencies

For more information: www.txabusehotline.org



cactx



Don't ever keep a secret that upsets you!

Victories

Psalm 3:8

1. **Alabama-(2017)-Governor's office secured funding through the Missing and Exploited Children Agency; The poster is displayed in schools under the ALEA (Alabama Law Enforcement Agency).**

"There was a meeting with Prevention and Support at Alabama State Department of Education, Department of Human Services, and Missing and Exploited Children to make sure we were all on the same page and have input to develop a graphic that displays the number in schools so it would be visible for children to see."

Representative Terri Collins, 256.227.0360

The Alabama Safe Schools Hotline 1-888-SAV-KIDS, (1-888-728-5437). Statewide hotline number operated by the Department of Public Safety's Missing and Exploited Children's Unit

(The Department of Education's attorney could not find a 'Ruling' requiring the poster to be displayed.)

2. **Alaska-(2016)-HB44** –(Plus –In order for teachers to be credited, they must have training in this area, according to Thatcher Brower, House Resources Committee Aid.)
3. **Arizona-(2021)-SB1114**
4. **Arkansas-(2017)-HB1435, Act 379**
5. **California-(2016)-SB1178**
6. **Colorado-(2016)-Safe2Tell-Attorney General** will add 'Abuse' to existing posters
(Plus, the Attorney General gives assemblies at schools, when invited, and displays the posters at that time.) call (720) 508.6000
7. **Connecticut-(2016)- SB316, SB179 Amendment A**
8. **Delaware-(2016)-HB292**
9. **Florida-(2016)-Section 1006.061.(1)- Florida Statute-SB7078**
10. **Georgia-(2019)-HB12**
11. **Hawaii-(2018)-Department of Human Services-Administrative Rule.**

*" I know you were disappointed that HB133 HD1 was deferred in the Education Committee. **The Department of Human Services (DHS) testified that they could do it through administrative rule...Please go to the capitol website and read the testimony form DHS.**" <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov>*

Christine B Fehn, office of Representative John Mizuno, Chair Committee on Health and Human Services, 808.586.6050, direct line 808.586.6050, mizuno2@capitol.hawaii.gov

12. **Idaho-(2016) School Safety and Security Department**-Idaho Division of Building Safety.
"HB514 passed in 2016...It gives organizations a place to go for these types of needs... I would recommend contacting Ron Whitney, Deputy Administrator, Idaho Division of Building Safety 208.332.7150, ron.whitney@dbs.idaho.gov " Representative Kelley Packer.
"Will do," Ron Whitney.
13. **Illinois-(2017)- HB370- P.A. 100-0413**
14. **Iowa-(2018)-Department of Education** *"...the Department of Education plans to share the Child Abuse Hotline poster via the Departments Schools Leader Update newsletter. The information will be sent out to school districts in August along with the downloadable poster as an attachment," Carol McMains, Office of the Director, Iowa Department of Education. 515.242.5988.*
15. **Indiana (2022) Directed by Governor, Department of Child Services**
16. **Kansas-(2016)-Posters were already in place for 'Threats.'** Legislators appropriated money for **Department of Education** displayed posters in schools including 'abuse.' (2-5-16 Representative Bradford called me to inform me that posters are being printed. He will insure they are in place.)
17. **Kentucky-(2016)-HB111-Acts Ch.125**
18. **Louisiana-(2016)-HB9-7act234-** (Plus-classroom instructions integrated into curriculum)
19. **Maine-(2019)-Department of Education** will provide poster to all schools
"... I have connected with the Commissioner and confirmed, as I mentioned previously, that we would be happy to provide a resource to our schools," Jessica Nixion, Chief of staff and Operations, Maine Department of Education. Jessica.nixion@maine.gov, 207.624.6851
20. **Maryland-(2018)-HB1386**
21. **Massachusetts-2020-MassKids Organization** created and printed poster-**MA. School Nurses Association** will distribute-**Voluntarily**
22. **Michigan-(2016)-OK2Say-Attorney General** will add abuse to existing posters. *Mary Gager Drew, Consumer Programs Administrator, Consumer Protection Division drew1@michigan.gov, 517.335.0855, 517.373.6786. Office of Attorney General. (They advertise on billboards, school posters-sent to school, Movie commercials, t.v., Girls and boys finals basketball games.)*
23. **Missouri-(2015)-SB341-Adm.160.975.12015**
24. **Montana-(2018)-Department of Public Instruction.** *"I have been in touch with the office of Public Instruction and their response is they plan on making this available by this*

summers training session. I believe you can safely check Montana off your list,” Senator Alan Doane. alandoane@midrivers.com

25. **Nebraska-(2019)** The Department of Education-Brian Halstead, Deputy Commissioner, had no rule or regulation forcing him to put posters in place. Having the posters in place was verified by Dept of Health. This was accomplished because schools and employees are liable in a **civil lawsuit** that could be filed against them if an employee does not report cases of abuse. Insurance companies that provide insurance coverage to school want the number displayed.
26. **Nevada-(2017)-AB305**
27. **New Hampshire-HB556-189:72-(2017)** includes doing a background check on school employees
28. **New Jersey-(2019)-S2489**
29. **New Mexico-(2016)-Children Youth and Family Department – “The CYFD did it *by rule,*”** Representative David Gallegos. CYFD already had a number and poster... my superintendent had told me that he had been notified. Children, Youth and Families are the state agency whose job it is to protect our children. The Sect. ...stated she would love to add the contact number and mandate it in schools...since then we discussed teaching the number through memorization at the same time they learn about 911, their home fares and phone number. My daughter is an investor for CYFD and she loved the idea **Secretary Monique Jacobson is over CYDF.”** Representative David Gallegos
30. **New York-(2015)-6961—A**
31. **North Carolina-(2021) SB693**
32. **North Dakota- Senator Schaible, Chairman of the Education Committee, sent the posters to all North Dakota School Districts, Principals, Superintendents and School Boards.**
33. **Oklahoma-(2016)-HB2435**
34. **OHIO-(2022) Department of Education and Department of Jobs and Family Services**
35. **Oregon-(2015)-SB790A**
36. **Pennsylvania-(2018)-HB1232**
37. **Rhode Island-(2016)-SB2368**
38. **South Carolina-(2019)-Department of Education** (*Representative Raye Felder called me reporting that Molly Spearman, SPI, agreed to put posters in schools.*) *“The posters have been printed and we will distribute them to each school district to be placed in the schools.” Emily Heatwole, South Carolina Department of Education, Director of Governmental Affairs.*

- 39. South Dakota-(2019)- 'Stand Up for Safety'-Attorney General's office will add abuse to existing posters. Attorney General Chief of Staff, Tim Bormann, "Will add 'abuse' to posters. They will make press releases, law enforcement speaks in schools at programs, hand out flyers and cards and put up posters."**
- 40. Tennessee-(2016)-HB1780**
- 41. Texas-(2013)-SB939**
- 42. Utah-(2014-2015)-SB232 & SB0175- (In addition to posters, an anonymous tip line for students was established that students can call or text. Also, a program to deal with sexual grooming, abuse, suicide prevention and bullying, 1 strike you're out for teachers, removal of statute of limitations for civil cases of abuse.)**
- 43. Vermont-(2018)-Department of Children and Family Services- Rule. "They provided posters in Spanish, French, Vietnamese, Bantu, Somali, Portuguese, India (native Abanaki and India) and Farsi," Representative Betsy Dunn. betsydunn@comsact.net**
- 44. Virginia-2016)-SB576 (2004) Chapter 710, Section 22.1-291.3**
- 45. Washington-(2018)-Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction" We plan to post the Child Abuse hotline poster on our OSPI website in a format that schools can easily access, download and print," Marissa Rathbone, Director of Operations office of Superintendents Public Instruction. Marissa.Rathbone@k12.wa.us**
- 46. West Virginia-(2018)-HB4402, Chapter 74, Acts**
- 47. Wyoming-Safe2Tell-(2016)-SF97-Attorney General-Program is fully funded by Homeland Security including call centers-apps for phones, team of professionals in each school, assemblies for student and the public, posters include terrorism threats, dating violence, abuse and suicide prevention. Bill Morse, Safe2Tell Wyoming Program Manager, Wyoming Attorney General's Office, Division Victim Services, bill.morse1@wyo.gov
307.777.4940**