



April 12th, 2023

Testimony on 2023 Senate Bill 35

Relating to: emergency contact records maintained by the Department of Transportation

Thank you, Chairman Tomczyk and other members of the committee, for hearing my testimony on Senate Bill 35 today. I also want to thank my colleague Rep. Loren Oldenburg for coming forth with this idea.

As a law enforcement officer, I know how important it is to have updated information in order to help our Wisconsin citizens. SB 35 will provide Wisconsin residents an opt-in feature with the DOT that will allow law enforcement to have an emergency contact on file for them. This information will be shared with law enforcement only and will allow cops like myself to be able to contact families quickly when it matters most.

My office was contacted by Christine Olson, a Florida resident who was born in Milwaukee. Christine shared with us about how her daughter Tiffany died in a tragic auto accident in 2005. Christine did not know for six hours that she had passed. When she went to the hospital in the middle of the night after another family called her, she was notified that her daughter had already been transferred to the morgue. Christine has worked hard to see this same legislation put into place in Florida, and they have heard many stories about how it has helped family members be there for each other in a timely manner. Christine shared with us that in her research, she found the national average that it took for law enforcement to reach families was 6 hours. I think we can all agree that if an improvement can be made here, we should do what we can for our residents.

Passing SB 35 will be an opportunity for us to make sure that precious time for families is never lost and that our emergency personnel are equipped with the information they need.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jesse James".

Senator Jesse James
23rd Senate District



LOREN OLDENBURG

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 96th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Senate Bill 35

Relating to: emergency contact records maintained by the Department of Transportation

Senate Committee on Transportation & Local Government

April 12th, 2023

Good Morning, Chairman Tomczyk and committee members, and thank you for holding a hearing on Senate Bill 35 today. I would like to thank Senator James for helping me with this legislation

In the instance of a severe accident, how are the family and friends of those involved contacted to be alerted that there has been an accident? Currently in Wisconsin, there is no way for law enforcement to find an emergency contact for those involved in an accident.

Under Senate Bill 35, the Department of Transportation (DOT) would inquire whether a person would like to participate in the optional emergency contact program. The DOT would also make participating in the optional program available on their website, and at each local DMV. The DOT is also to provide a way for law enforcement to have access to the emergency contact information. The emergency contact information would only be accessible by law enforcement.

Ten states have an emergency contact program that is associated with citizen's driver's license or state issued identification cards. Notably, the State of Florida has an Emergency Contact Information (ECI) system within the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (FLHSMV). The Florida ECI system originated after a young lady died in a car accident in 2005 in Florida. Her mother worked with her legislator and FLHSMV to establish an emergency contact system. As of November 2022, 18,942,402 Floridians have emergency contact information available to law enforcement through the ECI system.

Senator James and I introduced an amendment to the bill based on DOT's recommendation; section one is not needed. The amendment also addresses possible privacy concerns as to the information the applicant discloses to DOT. The amendment changes that the department may not disclose information about the applicant's emergency contact to anyone other than law enforcement or the applicant.

Passing Senate Bill 35 will be a great opportunity for us to make sure that in an emergency all those involved will have the information they need. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate bill 35.