



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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For Immediate Release:
February 24, 2016

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Assembly Chairwoman Shuts Down Discussion of Lincoln Hills Child Abuse

MADISON – Today, the Assembly Committee on Children & Families convened to review 90-Day Summary Reports for Child Deaths, Serious Injuries, or Egregious Abuse or Neglect Incidents released since 12/30/15, the Annual Child Abuse and Neglect Report for 2014, and the Annual Report of Sexual Abuse of Children in Out-of-Home Care Placement.

At the outset of the hearing, Chairwoman Jessie Rodriguez announced that she was going to prohibit any discussion of the abuse allegations that occurred at the Lincoln Hills School. The Chairwoman's gag order was made even though committee members had come prepared to discuss a 2014 child abuse and neglect report that did not reflect the numerous allegations of physical and sexual abuse that have since been substantiated by a Lincoln County Circuit Judge and are the subject of a recent F.B.I. investigation.

Democratic committee members voiced concerns that reports of child abuse at Lincoln Hills have gone uninvestigated by local child welfare officials, but those questions were not allowed during Wednesday's hearing. This, despite the fact that not a single 90-Day Summary Report for Child Deaths, Serious Injuries, or Egregious Abuse or Neglect Incidents was generated by Lincoln County in 2014 or 2015, when many of the abuses are alleged to have occurred, including broken bones, excessive force incidents, sexual assault by staff members, and attempted suicides by youth inmates.

"It is clear that the scandal at Lincoln Hills is an embarrassment for the Walker Administration, but that does not excuse the Assembly Committee on Children & Families from doing its job, asking the tough questions, and providing basic oversight of the safety and well-being of minors under state care and supervision," said Rep. LaTonya Johnson.

"If child abuse is occurring at Lincoln Hills, but child abuse investigations are not taking place, that should be a huge concern for a legislative committee dedicated to protecting our state's children and families," said Rep. Lisa Subeck.

"The media reports coming out of Lincoln Hills are horrifying, and every state representative should be demanding answers. Just because the F.B.I. has taken over the investigation does not mean that state legislators should sit back and wait to find out how so many abuses went unreported for so long," said Rep. Jill Billings.



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“When any agency files a report with the Legislature, the completeness and competency of the report should be subject to scrutiny in a committee meeting,” Rep. Kahl stated. “The people of Wisconsin have every right to know what occurred at Lincoln Hills and the absence of this information, coupled with the curtailment of dialogue on the topic, is concerning.”

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