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NEWS RELEASE:
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For More Information:
Contact: Senator Robert Cowles ~ (920) 448-5092

Bill to Combat Child Neglect Signed into Law

MADISON— Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement after 2017 Assembly Bill 355, authored by Senator Cowles and Representative Cody Horlacher (R-Mukwonago) with the help of Attorney General Brad Schimel, was signed into law by the Governor:

“Study after study has concluded that children exposed to abuse or neglect are at a greatly increased risk for future emotional or behavioral problems, including alcoholism, drug abuse, high-risk sexual behaviors, eating disorders, obesity, and depression. In 2015, there were over 3,000 substantiated reports of child neglect in Wisconsin, but due to a lack of clarity in the legal system, children were often forced to stay in neglectful situations for months before they received help.”

Previously, prosecutors were required to prove there was intent to neglect the child, a standard which was inherently contradictory. Assembly Bill 355 changes the standard to ‘negligently failing to act’ while adding language to combat the issues of repeated acts of neglect and subjecting a child to a drug endangered environment.

“I’ve authored this bill to combat the problem that have put these vulnerable children at risk by adding substance and clarity to Wisconsin’s child neglect statutes for law enforcement, prosecutors, social workers, community leaders, and caretakers. AB 355 is not designed to create more criminals, but it instead aligns our criminal neglect laws to serve as a barrier that better protects children in these troubling situations.”

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