



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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June 27, 2018

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WAFCA Urges Congressional Delegation to Keep Kids in Families

Last Friday, Wisconsin's Speaker's Task Force on Foster Care released their final report detailing the policy recommendations that emerged from a multi-month effort by legislators to engage stakeholders across Wisconsin in a conversation about the needs in our child and family serving system. While many themes emerged from the listening sessions hosted in regions across the state, three themes are particularly compelling in light of the current policy-imposed tragedy unfolding at our nation's southern border.

- **Children belong with their families.** Our child welfare system seeks to keep kids safely in families whenever possible. These preventative and restorative efforts are at the core of our practice here in Wisconsin and were profoundly reinforced by the recent passage of the Family First Prevention Services Act, which significantly shifts federal funding toward in-home treatment and services for parents to keep children safely home. This same, fundamental principle should apply to families regardless of immigrant status.
- **Removing children from their families is traumatic.** There is ample scientific evidence that emotional trauma experienced by children can have life-long effects on their mental and physical well-being. Wisconsin, through efforts like *Fostering Futures* and US Representative Gallagher's sponsorship of House Resolution 443, has championed the importance of trauma-informed care. These children of immigrants are already fleeing dangerous and oppressive conditions, our first response should be to do no further harm.
- **Our systems are already stretched trying to respond to the current drug crises.** We know that child welfare systems across the country are experiencing similar challenges and struggling to find safe and healing spaces for children. The policy to remove immigrant children from their parents greatly exacerbated the stressors on a national child welfare system stretched beyond capacity.

Our Wisconsin legislators are to be commended for the time and attention that they afforded our child welfare system this past legislative session. WAFCA values their expanded, deeper knowledge of the complex challenges facing our families and our systems and looks forward to continuing to work with our legislative leaders to continue advancing policies that promote family stability and well-being.

While the apparent reversal of the federal administration's family separation policy is a promising development, we urge Wisconsin's congressional delegation to look to the lessons learned by the Assembly Task Force -- keep families together, provide trauma-informed services, and support sufficient resources to rapidly reunify separated families and ensure effective, fair processing of their cases.

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WAFCA is a member association that works to improve the lives of families and children in Wisconsin.

Our member agencies provide a wide array of prevention and supportive services such as foster care, in-home support, counseling, and mental health treatment. WAFCA represents over 50 child and family serving agencies and leaders in the field and advocates for the more than 250,000 individuals and families that they serve each year.