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WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE

41<sup>ST</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Rep. Ballweg Introduces Legislation as part of the Speaker's Task Force on Foster Care's Foster Forward Package**

**Madison...** Representative Joan Ballweg (R-Markesan), as part of the Speaker's Task Force on Foster Care's Foster Forward Package, introduced legislation to create a pilot program to provide legal representation to parents whose children are the subject of a Child in Need of Protective Services petition.

"This Task Force gives us the unique opportunity to shine a light on foster children in Wisconsin," said Ballweg. "I am excited that we are introducing legislation that will bring real change to issues surrounding the Foster Care system."

The Speaker's Task Force on Foster Care introduced 13 policy initiatives to support children who are currently in the system, aging out of the system, and to prevent children from needing to enter the child welfare system in the first place. Members of the Task Force traveled across the state and held public hearings to gather feedback from foster youth, biological and foster parents, county social workers, the courts, and more.

"The ultimate goal in the Foster Care system is successful reunification," said Ballweg. "The bill I introduced will provide representation for biological parents and help them in the process for reunification."

During the statewide public hearings, one of the concerns from stakeholders was that the process for reunification was inefficient. The goal of this proposal is to provide legal representation to biological parents so they have the ability to follow the Court's orders at the initial hearings and not cause delays if the case proceeds to termination of parental rights. This bill creates a five county (Brown, Outagamie, Winnebago, Racine, and Kenosha), 3 year pilot program to study the value of the program for families and Wisconsin children in Foster Care.

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