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## **Bill to Address Teen Dating Violence Officially Introduced in WI Legislature**

**Madison**— A bi-partisan group of state legislators is hoping to move the Badger State towards a more comprehensive approach to addressing and preventing teen dating violence with legislation that would implement dating violence curricula in Wisconsin schools. Advocates say that the newly introduced bill will not only improve the health and safety of Wisconsin teens by breaking cycles of dangerous behavior that contribute to increased risk of drug abuse, truancy and suicide for current youth victims, but will also help to lower the risk of abuse occurring in future generations.

Teen dating violence, which advocates define as a pattern of destructive behaviors used to exert power and control over a dating partner, is increasingly recognized as a widespread problem. One in three teens in the US is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner. This rate is higher than all other forms of youth violence. Over half of teens, 57-percent, know someone who has been physically, sexually, or verbally abusive in a dating relationship. Advocates report that this legislation is a critical part of ongoing efforts to prevent abuse in future generations.

“Each new generation brings enormous potential, particularly during this period when a spotlight is being shined on gendered and sexual violence in many different forms” said Patti Seger, Executive Director of End Domestic Abuse WI (End Abuse). “With greater understanding that harmful relationship dynamics take hold during teenage years, we can now more intentionally instill values of equality and mutual respect in the next generation and thereby lower the rate of domestic violence in the future.”

LRB-5038, which was circulated for co-sponsorship earlier today, would require school boards to adopt policies addressing teen dating violence, including:

- Prohibiting teen dating violence at schools or school-related events and activities;
- Model, age-appropriate instruction about preventing and responding to teen dating violence for pupils in grades 7 through 12;
- Training and procedures for identifying, preventing, and responding to teen dating violence for school district employees, and identifying school district employees responsible for receiving teen dating violence incident reports.

“We appreciate the efforts of the bi-partisan group of legislators working on this initiative, including lead authors Rep. Melissa Sargent (D-Madison) and Sen. Jerry Petrowski (R-Marathon) as well as Sen. Jennifer Shilling (D-La Crosse) and Representative John Spiros (R-Marshfield), who has worked tirelessly on the legislation in previous sessions and remains a strong supporter of the bill,” said Seger. “Now we are looking to the full Wisconsin Legislature to show that dating violence is not a partisan issue by coming together to support this common-sense proposal that will move our state closer to addressing the root causes of domestic violence.”

If LRB-5038 is signed into law, Wisconsin would join the growing list of over 20 states that have implemented dating violence curricula in schools.

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*End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin: The Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence is the leading voice for victims of domestic abuse in Wisconsin. At End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, we educate shelter and program volunteers and advocates, law enforcement, legislators, and community members to provide safety and support to survivors. We strive to shift Wisconsin from the attitudes and beliefs that cause domestic violence to values of mutual respect and equality, and we partner with communities in the effort to prevent and end domestic abuse.*

*We encourage reporters to include the National Domestic Violence Hotline number [1-800-799-SAFE(7233)] in their stories for victims who need help. A list of local Wisconsin domestic violence victim service providers can be found at <http://www.endabusewi.org>.*