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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 4TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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Bill to Empower Victims of Child Sex Trafficking Receives Public Hearing *Bipartisan proposal is part of Speaker's Task Force on Human Trafficking*

Madison, WI – Today, legislation that will enhance the legal options for victims of child trafficking received a public hearing in the State Assembly. The bipartisan bill authored by State Representative David Steffen (R-Howard) is part of the Speaker's Task Force on Human Trafficking.

The Task Force met several times this session and gathered input from stakeholders and community members to find legislative solutions to this complex issue. The Green Bay Police Department was among those who testified. Detective Pakkala provided statistics on the prevalence of trafficking in Green Bay—noting that from 2017-2023 the Department identified 229 traffickers, 401 victims of trafficking and 124 trafficking networks.

The proposal led by Rep. Steffen is twofold and provides victims of child trafficking greater opportunity to pursue civil action in our court system. The proposal:

- Increases the civil action-related statute of limitations for child trafficking victims to age 35. Under current law, victims of child trafficking are limited to a three-year period to bring forth a civil action. This change brings into alignment the statute of limitations for child trafficking with the current statute of limitations for sexual assault of a child.
- Allows child trafficking victims to pursue civil action regardless of whether someone has been criminally convicted in their case. Under current law, a victim of child trafficking may only pursue civil action if there has been a criminal prosecution or conviction.

“Child trafficking isn’t something that only happens in other states or other communities—it’s something that’s happening right in our own neighborhood. While there is no simple solution, this bill and the package of bills produced by the Task Force are an important part of that solution,” said Rep. Steffen. “It’s critical that we expand the pathway for victims to seek justice and work to hold perpetrators accountable.”

The bill will next move on for a committee vote before becoming available for consideration by the full Assembly.

For more information please contact the office of Representative Steffen at (608)237-9104 or by email at Rep.Steffen@legis.wisconsin.gov.

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