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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Representative Brooks Supports Increased Guardian Ad Litem Training

Madison, WI— Earlier this week, Representative Rob Brooks (R-Saukville) had the privilege of testifying before the Wisconsin Supreme Court in support of amending Supreme Court Rule 35.015 relating to training for guardians ad litem (GALs) appointments to family law cases.

The petition to the Supreme Court originated in the Study Committee on Child Placement and Support that Representative Brooks chaired last summer.

Currently, lawyers must have 6 hours of GAL education prior to accepting an initial GAL appointment within family law proceedings. GALs are also required to have 6 education hours for subsequent appointments.

Under the petition, the study committee advocated for 3 of the 6 initial education hours to be focused on the dynamics and impact of family violence. In addition, the study committee asked for 1 of the 6 subsequent education hours to concentrate on this topic.

“One of recurring issues during the study committee’s work was guardians ad litem. There was a consensus that GALs need further training to understand the numerous issues that impact placement decisions. The committee weighed several areas where they thought additional training would benefit GALs including, opioid addiction and alcohol abuse. Ultimately, increased training on domestic abuse garnered the most support,” said Representative Brooks.

After a public hearing, the Wisconsin Supreme Court has verbally indicated that it plans to expand upon the study committee’s rule change request. The Supreme Court will now require GALs to have 9 hours of GAL education prior to accepting an initial family law GAL appointment. An additional 3 credits will need to focus solely on family violence. The Supreme Court also accepted the request for 1 of 6 subsequent education hours to relate to family violence.

“Domestic abuse is, unfortunately, an issue that continues to plague many of the families navigating through Wisconsin’s family law system. I have a deep appreciation for the integral role that GALs play in the placement of children during custody battles. The study committee members and I wanted to ensure that GALs truly have proper training when dealing with these extremely sensitive situations. So much of a child’s placement schedule depends on the GAL’s recommendation to the court and I am pleased that the Supreme Court recognizes the need for GALs to have the necessary training to advocate for the best interest of the child. I look forward to continuing to explore methods to support families and practitioners who are involved in the family law system,” stated Representative Brooks.

Earlier this year, Representative Brooks was recognized as the Wisconsin Child Support Enforcement Association’s Legislator of the Year for his continued efforts to advocate for children across Wisconsin.

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