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STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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Governor Evers Signs Rep. Billings' Bill to Protect Youth Victims and Witnesses of Human Trafficking in the Courtroom

Madison – Today, Governor Evers signed into law Assembly Bill 976, which increases protections for children testifying in human trafficking cases. Representative Billings introduced this bill and released the following statement:

“I am grateful for the work of countless survivors, advocates, educators, and my fellow lawmakers who have worked for years to help end trafficking in Wisconsin. My legislation, which Governor Evers signed into law this afternoon, will protect child victims and witnesses while they testify in human trafficking prosecutions and help children who have been victimized as they rebuild their lives.”

“I introduced this bill as part of my work as a member of the Speaker’s Human Trafficking Task Force, which held hearings where my colleagues and I heard about how difficult it can be for survivors to testify against their traffickers. My bill expands state law, which previously allowed only children under 16 to testify remotely, by allowing 16 and 17 years old victims and witnesses to testify remotely in trafficking cases. It is difficult for any survivor to spend time in a courtroom with a trafficker who exploited and abused them, but it is particularly distressing for children.”

“This legislation was inspired by a Shared Hope International recommendation. Shared Hope gave Wisconsin an F rating for our laws combatting trafficking and supporting child victims and this new law takes an important step toward improving our state’s laws and ultimately eradicating human trafficking. We in the legislature should build on this momentum to move forward and pass more legislation to stop trafficking. I have spent over a decade working to advance legislation like Safe Harbor to protect survivors and stop trafficking and I hope when we reconvene for the next legislative session, we can pass legislation like Safe Harbor to do right by survivors and make human trafficking a thing of the past in Wisconsin.”

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