

Children and Families

AB 176 – Child Safety Alarms In Certain Vehicles That Transport Children

Rep. Grigsby

Summary of Bill as amended:

Assembly Bill (AB) 176 provides that a child care provider or contractor of a child care provider that owns or leases a child care vehicle must install a child safety alarm before the vehicle is placed into service. Under the bill, a “child care vehicle” is a vehicle that has a seating capacity of six or more passengers in addition to the driver and a “child safety alarm” is an audible system that prompts the driver to inspect the vehicle for children before exiting. The bill grants a grace period of three months after the effective date to install a child safety alarm. Any person who knowingly transports a child to or from a child care provider in a child care vehicle in which a child safety alarm has not been installed, is not properly maintained, or is not in good working order may be fined not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned for not more than one year in the county jail or both. The same penalty applies to any child care provider or contractor.

Assembly Amendment 1 to AB 176 states that DCF will provide information about child safety alarms.

Assembly Amendment 2 to AB 176 adds that no person may remove, disconnect, or tamper with a child safety alarm, except for the purpose of testing, maintenance, or repair.

Assembly Amendment 3 to AB 176 requires that when DCF or the county inspects a licensed or contracted child care provider, they must also inspect the child safety alarm in each vehicle to determine whether the alarm is in good working order.

Fiscal Effect:

The fiscal estimate from DCF states that childcare providers that use vehicles with a capacity of six or more passengers will incur the cost of purchasing and installing the child safety alarm systems. It is estimated that these devices can be purchased and installed in the range of \$200-\$1000 per vehicle. Since it is unknown how many vehicles will be affected, the overall fiscal impact on providers is unknown. No fiscal impact will result from compliance checks on the state and local level; the cost can be absorbed by DCF and local agencies.

Supporters Message:

- AB 176 is in response to the tragic death of 4 month-old Jalen Knox-Perkins who was left unattended in a child care vehicle and numerous other instances like it where children have lost their lives. The cost of adding a child safety alarm to a child care vehicle far outweighs the price of losing another child in Wisconsin.
- Child safety alarm technology is readily available and can be installed in a vehicle in about an hour. Having the driver move to the back of the child care vehicle to turn off the alarm will increase child safety by having him or her pass by every seating row where a child might still exist.

Opponents Message:

- It is difficult to legislate common sense. Child care providers might choose the least expensive child care alarm option in order to satisfy state law and its proper function could be a continuing source of problems.

Key Supporters:

Rep. Grigsby; Senator Coggs; the family of 4-month old Jalen Knox-Perkins; Department of Children and Families; City of Milwaukee Police Department; City of Milwaukee Health Department; Wisconsin Council on Children and Families; AFSCME; Penfield Childcare of Milwaukee; and Reid Childcare of Milwaukee. Registering in support on the GAB web site: Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association; Wisconsin Public Health Association; Wisconsin Association of School Boards Inc; Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards; City of Milwaukee; Milwaukee Police Association.

Key Opponents:

No one testified or registered against AB 176.

Committee Vote:

On April 22, 2009 the Assembly Committee on Children and Families recommended adoption of AA1, AA2, and AA3 to AB 176 by a unanimous vote, and recommended final passage of AB 176 as amended by a unanimous vote.

Ranking Member Author of Bill Summary

Dave Matzen; Office of Rep. Steve Kestell (6-8530)