



Samantha J. Kerkman

State Representative • Serving the 66th Assembly District

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Special Committee Digs Deeper into Permanency Barriers

Madison – State Representative Samantha Kerkman held the second meeting today of the Special Committee on Permanency for Young Children in the Child Welfare System. Kerkman is the chair of the special study committee, which was created by the Joint Legislative Council to study current law relating to permanency for children in the child welfare system under the age of eight and to make policy recommendations. The Committee is made up of both legislators and public members with very diverse backgrounds and experience with the child welfare system. Members were chosen by the Joint Legislative Council.

“Today’s meeting provided a valuable opportunity to further investigate some of the important barriers we have identified that impede permanency for children.” Kerkman said after the meeting. “We were able to hear testimony from many different speakers that are involved in different aspects of the permanency process. I’m looking forward to continuing this important discussion at our next meeting.”

Today’s meeting focused on gathering information from a wide array of presenters who testified before the Committee. The Department of Children and Families elaborated on statistical information that was presented at the June 27th meeting. A representative from NCSL provided insightful knowledge about how other states have successfully reformed their child welfare laws. Several members of the Wisconsin Association of Family and Children’s Agencies shared information about family-finding efforts, family services, and adoption resources. Representatives from Mental Health America presented the perspective of the biological parent trying to overcome mental health challenges and reclaim their children. The State Public Defender’s office presented their unique perspective in representing biological parents in court.

All meetings of the Committee are public record. Today’s meeting was recorded by Wisconsin Eye and may be viewed by the public online. The Committee will continue to meet monthly until the end of the year.

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