



# Samantha J. Kerkman

State Representative • Serving the 66<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

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CONTACT: State Representative Samantha J. Kerkman

September 11, 2012

608-266-2530

## Special Committee Discusses Permanency Solutions

**Madison** –Today, State Representative Samantha Kerkman held the third meeting 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 hearing focused on exploring ways to modify Wisconsin law to improve a child's experience in foster care and expedite the path to permanency. First, the Committee heard testimony from three corporation counsel attorneys from different areas of the state. Their presentation centered on their experience from the courts' perspective with child welfare cases. Next, the members heard from a panel of current and former foster youth about their experiences in foster care. They recounted moving stories of what they have experienced and made recommendations for change. Finally, the Committee heard a presentation through video conference from a staff attorney at the Minnesota Supreme Court about Minnesota's successes in expediting permanency for foster youth. The members then discussed ideas for potential legislation to be submitted in the next legislative session. Based on this discussion, the Committee voted to draft bills to discuss at the next hearing.

"I was brought to tears by the moving testimony we heard today from current and former foster youth have overcome great odds to achieve success," said Rep. Kerkman. "Their stories of personal experience and recommendations for change truly enriched the committee's understanding of the foster care system from the child's perspective."

All meetings of the Committee are public record. Today's meeting and previous meetings may be viewed by the public online at [wiseye.org](http://wiseye.org). The Committee will continue to meet monthly until the end of the year.

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