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COMMITTEE CLEARS CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE FOR SCHOOLS

Sen. Jacque's bill adds Wisconsin to 43 other states that help more victims report abuse

MADISON, WI... Wisconsin is one step closer to joining 43 other states that require schools to post a child abuse hotline phone number, after the bill unanimously cleared the Assembly Education Committee today. The State Senate passed the measure last summer.

“Children are our most valuable – and vulnerable – resource for the future of Wisconsin,” said State Sen. André Jacque (R-De Pere), co-author of the bill with State Rep. Scott Krug (R-Nekoosa). “In instances of abuse or neglect, they must have all the information they need to protect themselves when the adults in their lives fail to do so.”

According to the Center for Child Advocacy:

- The median age of a child who is sexually abused is 9 years old
- 60% of women who are incarcerated had been sexually abused
- 45% of pregnant teens report a history of sexual abuse
- Drug and Alcohol dependency-70% preceded by sexual abuse
- Sexually transmitted diseases-60% preceded by sexual abuse

Sen. Jacque said the measure requires schools - public, private and charter schools - to post the phone number for a child abuse and neglect hotline. The sign would be posted in an open public location in each school building and include the telephone number for the local county or state agency that is responsible for receiving reports of, and conducting investigations regarding, child abuse or neglect. The message will be clear, positive, easy to comprehend, appropriate for all ages, and available for schools to download and print it at no cost.

“Requiring schools to post a child abuse hotline number for all students to see will empower children by giving them the essential information and knowledge that they have the right to directly self-report abuse without going through an adult,” Sen. Jacque said. “It also puts predators on notice, since a significant percentage of the children who are abused are abused by older, more powerful students.”

Sen. Jacque said the National Conference of State Legislators wrote a brief in support of this legislation in January 2015, calling it a concrete, simple and inexpensive way for school children to seek help in a safe environment. This proposal has also previously received support from the Wisconsin Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, and has received the formal support of the Department of Public Instruction and Wisconsin’s Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board.

The legislation ([Senate Bill 238](#)) must now pass the full Assembly and be signed by the Governor to become law.

Senator André Jacque represents Northeast Wisconsin’s First Senate District, consisting of Door and Kewaunee Counties and portions of Brown, Calumet, Manitowoc, and Outagamie counties.