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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statewide Address Confidentiality Program for Victims of Actual and Feared Abuse Available April 1

Madison, WI – Today, Attorney General Brad Schimel announced the launch of *Safe at Home*, a statewide address confidentiality program which begins April 1, 2017. *Safe at Home* provides victims of domestic abuse, child abuse, sexual abuse, stalking, and trafficking with a legal substitute address and free mail forwarding service. Enrollment in *Safe at Home* allows those who fear for their physical safety to maintain a confidential home, work, or school address.

“Those living in fear that their abuser might someday find them deserve to feel safe and secure in their own home, school, and workplace,” said Attorney General Brad Schimel. “The Department of Justice is honored to be able to provide this important public service and subsequent peace of mind to the most vulnerable of crime victims.”

“I appreciate the dedication and collaborative efforts of victim advocates in bringing this important program to the people of Wisconsin,” stated *Safe at Home* Director Erin Welsh. “With the assistance of statewide coalitions, we are ensuring that victims in every corner of the state have access to *Safe at Home* as a safety planning tool.”

Thanks to legislation authors Senators Scott Fitzgerald and Jennifer Shilling, and Representatives Joel Kleefisch and Chris Taylor, Wisconsin joins 35 other states in adopting an address confidentiality program, which was enacted in 2016 with bipartisan support as Wisconsin Act 356.

Senate Majority Scott Fitzgerald, one of the lead authors of the *Safe at Home* legislation, praised the program: “The freedom to feel safe in one’s home is absolutely essential for survivors as they attempt to rebuild their lives, and this program aims to provide that security. I am proud to have sponsored this common sense measure and proud to see it become a reality today.”

“For survivors of domestic abuse, stalking and human trafficking, safety is always a top concern,” said Senator Jennifer Shilling. “Things that most families take for granted – like paying a utility bill, enrolling a child in after school activities or applying for a job – create potentially dangerous situations for many survivors. The Safe at Home program will protect individuals from violence and help survivors move forward with their lives.”

"Every person deserves the chance to start a new life and to move forward with the life they have, especially when they have undergone the toughest of horrors," said Representative Kleefisch. "Protecting the most vulnerable among us has always been a priority of mine, and it is great to see this program beginning in Wisconsin."

“I’m proud to be part of this vital initiative that provides an additional layer of protection and safety to victims of sex trafficking, harassment, domestic and sexual violence. The vast majority of states have already passed this legislation and I am thrilled that Wisconsin has now joined them,” said Rep. Taylor. “Put simply, this program will save women and children’s lives.”

The program is supported by a broad base of partners including End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Legal Action of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Women’s Network, the Wisconsin Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, the Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association, and the Wisconsin Association of Family & Children’s Agencies.

Individuals intending to enroll in *Safe at Home* must first participate in safety planning with a trained victim service provider or community-based advocate designated by *Safe at Home*. Mandatory safety planning ensures that the protections offered by *Safe at Home* are implemented in a way that is meaningful and comprehensive for each participant. To date, nearly sixty advocates across the state are designated to provide safety planning services free of charge to *Safe at Home* applicants.

To learn more, visit the Safe at Home website at www.SafeAtHomeWI.gov. To enroll in Safe at Home, call 1-800-446-6564.

Additional materials about *Safe at Home* are attached, including:

- *Safe at Home* Program Overview
- *Safe at Home* Application
- *Safe at Home* Guide for Schools
- *Safe at Home* Guide for Application Assistants