



Wisconsin Family Ties

Written Testimony in Opposition: AB1070, AB1071, AB1072, AB1073: December 3, 2018

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It is our custom at Wisconsin Family Ties (WFT) to begin our comments on legislative proposals with a word of appreciation for the opportunity to provide testimony.

However, with the package of bills being proposed for this week's "extraordinary session," the timeline practically precludes testimony altogether. Noticing a hearing after-hours on Friday, for a single committee hearing at 12:30 on Monday, for bills comprising hundreds of pages of complex and far-reaching changes to state government in Wisconsin, does not constitute a legitimate opportunity for stakeholder feedback. Furthermore, as of this writing, it was not yet even possible to formally register opposition online at the Wisconsin Eye on Lobbying site.

Despite being given no opportunity to perform the level of in-depth analysis that complex proposals demand, WFT still offers the following comments expressing our opposition to AB1070, AB1071, AB1072, and AB1073.

Taken together, these bills constitute an extreme re-ordering of the existing balance of powers between the legislative and administrative branch.

In practice, between the intended effects and the unintended consequences, the package of legislation stands to undermine the wellbeing of the families of children with mental and behavioral health challenges that Wisconsin Family Ties serves.

Among other effects, AB1070 would place a massive burden on state agencies, including the state agencies whose work impacts children and youth, for reprocessing guidance documents that will be automatically rescinded if the deadline is not met. This is a virtually impossible task, and will likely result in missing guidance as well as the re-purposing of state staff from current crucial initiatives.

AB1071 would spend nearly \$7 million on a separate election for the publicly-admitted benefit of a particular candidate, with a timeline that expert county-clerks have declared to be impossible. The figure of \$7 million is noteworthy because it comprises the entire sum of funding in the 2017-19 state budget devoted to school mental health. It took months of painstaking advocacy and patient effort to get that funding approved; the prospect of casually spending that amount for an impossible election that amounts to a taxpayer contribution to elect an anointed candidate, is unconscionable.

AB1072 would create immense roadblocks for the ongoing work of creating changes and improvements to Medicaid waivers and services in Wisconsin. The process of negotiating Medicaid changes between the Wisconsin Department of Health Services and the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is already extensive and involved. AB1072 removes state agency authority to carry out the work of routine and necessary changes and renewals to Medicaid waivers, including the Children's Long Term Support waiver and the Katie Beckett waiver, which are crucial to children with mental and behavioral health challenges and their families.

AB1073 represents an omnibus of the aforementioned bills and therefore includes all the detriments listed above.

Wisconsin Family Ties opposes this package of bills, both for reasons of process and content, and urgently requests that the members of the Joint Committee on Finance to do the same.

Wisconsin Family Ties, Wisconsin's family voice for children's mental health, is a parent-run nonprofit organization serving families that include children with social, emotional, behavioral or mental health challenges. Founded in 1987, its mission is to change lives by improving children's mental health.

Wisconsin's family voice for children's mental health

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