

RESOLUTION 2016 - 10

Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 326/Assembly Bill 429 Affecting Child Welfare Practice

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 326/Assembly Bill 429 have been introduced by Senator Robert Cowles and Representative John Macco; and

WHEREAS, the bills relate to the referral of cases of suspected or threatened child abuse or neglect to the sheriff or police department, coordination of the investigation of those cases, and referral of those cases to the district attorney for criminal prosecution; and

WHEREAS, while the bills, on their face, might seem favorable, the bills in fact compromise child welfare best practice; and

WHEREAS, even though the legislation impacts child welfare practice, the state Department of Children and Families, Office of Children's Mental Health, county child welfare agencies, and child advocacy organizations were not consulted on the legislation; and

WHEREAS, issues with the legislation include the following:

- Law enforcement involvement in all child welfare cases negatively impacts alternative response, community response, and other voluntary services provided to families;
- The legislation is in sharp contrast to evidence-based practice, including trauma-informed care;
- The legislation requires child welfare agencies to “coordinate in the planning and execution of the investigation” in all cases, including screened out cases in which the child welfare agency lacks statutory authority to act;
- The bills require all reports to be referred to law enforcement within 12 hours, allowing for no prioritization of cases;
- The implementation of the legislation has not been thought through, especially when it comes to confidentiality, jurisdictional issues, and the philosophical differences between law enforcement and child welfare agencies; and

WHEREAS, counties and law enforcement in most jurisdictions have a positive working relationship and have entered into Memorandums of Understanding with regard to how local agencies will respond to reports of child abuse and neglect; and

WHEREAS, counties have requested that the proponents of the legislation bring all parties impacted by the legislation together so all gain an understanding of the others' needs; and

WHEREAS, counties believe a compromise on the legislation can be negotiated; however, such a meeting has yet to take place.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Vilas County Board of Supervisors in session this 26th day of January, 2016 that we oppose Senate Bill 326/Assembly Bill 429.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Vilas County renews the request for a meeting of all interested parties to discuss the legislation in greater detail.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this Resolution is sent to all Vilas County state legislators.

SUBMITTED BY: Social Services Board

s/ Alden Bauman, Chair

s/ Erv Teichmiller

s/ Mark Rogacki

s/ Kim Simac

s/ Thomas Maulson