



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families

**FROM:** Kyle Christianson, Director of Government Affairs

**DATE:** May 31, 2017

**SUBJECT:** Support for Assembly Bill 290

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) supports Assembly Bill 290, which allows counties to work cooperatively on certain child protective services functions.

County governments work hard daily to provide a high level of services to the citizens of this state, while at the same time trying to do so in an efficient manner. However, state statutes often get in the way making it difficult, if not impossible, for counties to achieve efficiencies through innovative collaborations. Assembly Bill 290 will make it possible for four counties – Chippewa, Monroe, Taylor, and Pepin – to implement a multi-county access and screening partnership, improving their implementation of, and outcomes in, the child welfare system.

The proposed Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN) Partnership is an excellent example of counties working together to find efficiencies and provide services more effectively. However, it is yet another example of how state statutes stifle the ability of counties to work together. This is the third bill counties have had to introduce in the last few legislative sessions to allow counties to provide services in a cooperative manner. The first bill allowed two counties, Jackson and Clark, to share a highway commissioner. The second bill eliminated statutory impediments, clearing the way for the counties of Ozaukee and Washington to share a public health department.

WCA has been working with members of the administration and Legislature on the creation of a “joint agency statute” to make it easier for counties to work together by eliminating the statutory impediments to joint service delivery. Until the “joint agency statute” is enacted, counties will need to continue to come to the Legislature, as have the counties in the CAN Partnership, to seek statutory permission to provide services in a more efficient and effective manner. Counties, and the citizens they serve, however,

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should not have to wait for the implementation of separate legislation each and every time counties seek to work together to implement efficiencies in service delivery.

WCA supports the innovation proposed by the CAN Partnership and respectfully requests your support for Assembly Bill 290.

Thank you for considering our comments.