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MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Sarah Diedrick-Kasdorf, Deputy Director of Government Affairs

DATE: December 5, 2019

SUBJECT: Assembly Bills 608-610

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) appreciates the opportunity to make a few comments regarding Assembly Bills 608-610. The bills were recommended for introduction by the Joint Legislative Council's Study Committee on Bail and Conditions of Pretrial Release.

Bail reform and pretrial release are complicated issues that many states are currently struggling with. Modifications to the state's pretrial release system should be made utilizing evidence-based, data informed approaches. There are currently eight counties in Wisconsin working to implement changes to the pretrial detention system. These counties have invested many hours sharing evidence-based approaches, implementing the use of a pretrial risk assessment tool, and creating a pretrial services system all with the goal of ensuring only those individuals who truly need to be detained to ensure community safety are detained on a pretrial basis.

That being said, there is still much work to be done. While WCA has positions to support bail reform, including the elimination of cash bail as a condition of release, modifications to the system should occur as part of a comprehensive overhaul of the pretrial system. That includes the provision of resources by the state to counties for the creation and implementation of pretrial services. As a result, WCA asks that the bills be placed on hold, allowing the state Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, its Evidence-Based Decision-Making Subcommittee, and counties to continue their work in developing a comprehensive pretrial reform package.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me at the WCA office if you have any questions.