**2018 Legislative Council Study Committee on Access to Out-of-Home Mental Health Care for Children**

**Topic (Summary)**

Examining options for families to access out-of-home mental health care for their children, without the children having to enter the child welfare system.

**Why should this be selected as a legislative council study?**

Under current Wisconsin law, when a child needs out-of-home mental health care, and insurance coverage is not available or parents cannot afford treatment, parents must enter the child welfare system via a voluntary CHIPS/JIPS petition. Parents often experience this process as stigmatizing and distressing, when they are working very hard to get needed care for their children.

Under current law, parents who file voluntary CHIPS/JIPS petitions may be required to pay up to 17% of their gross income towards the child’s care. For moderate and low-income families, this is an economic burden that can negatively affect other children in the family. An alternate parent pay system could maintain a parent financial responsibility without unduly burdening families of modest means.

**Was there any legislation in the past session that should be referenced in this study?**

* 2017 Act 59 (State Budget), Section 977 / Youth Crisis Stabilization facilities. This new option created under DHS rather than DCF, when implemented, will allow for mental health crisis stays for children without child welfare system involvement.
* The Assembly Mental Health Reform Committee and the Department of Health Services have both identified a serious lack of access to children’s mental health services.

**What is the expected outcome of this study?**

Legislation that would create an alternate mechanism for families to access out-of-home mental health care for their children that does not require them to enter the same system as families found to have abused and/or neglected their children.

**Please list how you suggest the scope of this study should read:**

The Study Committee is directed to review the process in which families gain access to out-of-home mental health care for their children. The committee shall examine options that would not require children to enter the child welfare system, including a review of existing processes in other states, and explore funding models that would provide sufficient funding in a manner less burdensome for families.

**List at least one legislator for each partisan caucus that you feel might be interested in this topic and may be willing to serve on this committee**:

**List citizens and organizations that should be represented on the study committee:**

Joanne Juhnke, Wisconsin Family Ties; Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin, Lutheran Social Services,

Disability Rights Wisconsin

**List key contact for further information:**

**Will you serve on the committee?**

**If asked, will you chair the committee?**

**Additional comments:**

Families who are trying to care for their children should be supported and encouraged to stay connected to their children’s mental health treatment. (perhaps mention a constituent’s experience)

**Signature / date**