

WASHINGTON COUNTY, WISCONSIN

Date of enactment: 11/14/18

Date of publication: 11/23/18

VOTE

2018 RESOLUTION 55

Advisory Resolution Supporting Increased Funding and Oversight Reforms for Wisconsin's Child Protective Services System

WHEREAS, the Washington County child welfare system is county-operated and state-supervised by the Department of Children and Families (DCF); and

WHEREAS, the state has the primary responsibility for compliance with federal requirements and shares liability for ensuring the child protective services system is meeting its obligations to Wisconsin's children and families, but DCF provides limited funding to counties for the delivery of child abuse and neglect services including prevention, investigation, treatment, and out-of-home placement costs; and

WHEREAS, the state of Wisconsin added numerous mandates and practice expectations which increased county child protective services (CPS) workload and costs including the increase in licensure for kinship placements; and

WHEREAS, the opioid epidemic has brought Wisconsin's child welfare system to a point of crisis, increasing the concern about the system's ability to meet its obligations to children and families; and

WHEREAS, earlier this year, the Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty found a strong relationship between opioid hospitalizations and the number of children entering out-of-home care; and

WHEREAS, the capacity for counties to continue to bear the bulk of financial responsibility to address this crisis has been exhausted, as rising county contributions to the CPS system have far outpaced increases from the DCF Children and Family Aids allocation; and

WHEREAS, maintaining resources for Wisconsin's child welfare system is critical to secure the safety and future of our most vulnerable children; and

WHEREAS, without a proportional increase in the DCF Children and Family Services allocation, the CPS system has been stressed for over a decade, causing caseloads for CPS workers to grow significantly, contributing to high levels of staff turnover in some counties and overrun out-of-home care costs above what counties can sustain within current revenue barriers; and

WHEREAS, Washington County saw a 34% increase in CPS out-of-home costs from 2012 to 2016; and

WHEREAS, Washington County has received small, one-time grants without any guarantee of continuing support causing a greater strain on county resources or program cuts; and

1
2 **WHEREAS,** Wisconsin’s CPS system leaves significant gaps in state-level oversight,
3 including the absence of caseload standards, and no process for regular evaluation to prioritize
4 CPS needs, funding, performance, cost sharing, and long term stability; and
5

6 **WHEREAS,** all eleven of Wisconsin’s peer states with county-administered CPS
7 systems have either adopted caseload standards for CPS caseworkers, completed thorough
8 workload studies as a basis of determining funding needs, or otherwise have made significant
9 recommendations related to keeping CPS workloads manageable; and
10

11 **WHEREAS,** the children within Wisconsin’s CPS system are too important to allow the
12 current level of under resourcing, oversight gaps, and disparity of attention while shifting the
13 burden to property tax levies;
14

15 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Washington County Board of
16 Supervisors that the State of Wisconsin increase the Children and Family Aids Allocation to
17 counties in the 2019-21 state biennial budget in order to cover a greater share of out-of-home
18 care costs and maintain staffing levels based on industry developed caseload standards.
19

20 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** the State should seek innovations and reforms to lower
21 costs and mandates on the county CPS systems.
22

23 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** the Washington County Board directs a copy of this
24 resolution to be sent to the Office of the Governor, the Secretaries of the Department of
25 Administration and the Department of Children and Families, legislators representing
26 Washington County, and the Wisconsin Counties Association.
27

28
29 VOTE REQUIREMENT FOR PASSAGE: Majority

30
31 RESOLUTION SUMMARY: Advisory resolution supporting increased funding and oversight
32 reforms for Wisconsin’s Child Protective Services System.
33

34 APPROVED: Introduced by members of the HUMAN SERVICES
35 (signed by Bradley S. Stern) COMMITTEE as filed with the County Clerk.

36 Bradley S. Stern, County Attorney

37 Dated 11/15/18 (signed by Kristine M. Deiss)

38 Considered 11/14/18 Kristine M. Deiss, Chairperson

39 Adopted 11/14/18

40 Ayes 26 Noes 0 Absent 0

41 Voice Vote _____

42
43 (There is no direct/immediate fiscal impact.)