

Date: December 10, 2019

Re: AB 633—transport for Emergency Detention - Informational

To: Chair Tittl and members of the Assembly Mental health committee

From: Barbara Beckert, Disability Rights Wisconsin, Director Milwaukee Officer

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony to inform your consideration of AB 633, Transport for Emergency Detention. Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) is the designated Protection and Advocacy system for Wisconsinites with disabilities. DRW is charged with protecting and enforcing the legal rights of individuals with disabilities, investigating systemic abuse and neglect, and ensuring access to supports and services.

We respect the intent of the bill's authors to provide an alternative way to transport people experiencing a mental health crisis. DRW is supporting of alternatives that will provide a more humane way to transport people and to decriminalize the emergency detention process.

As proposed, AB 633 would allow for law enforcement to contract with other agencies to transport people experiencing a mental health crisis. It does not provide any criteria for providers such as requirements that providers be trained on safety, de-escalation, mental illness, and trauma, and other essentials topics. The best practice is for law enforcement to receive Crisis Intervention team training (CIT). AB633 includes no such requirement for contractors who would be responsible for transporting some of our most vulnerable community members in a manner that protects their rights, is humane and is safe for all parties.

Currently the law enforcement personal who provide transport are public employees and as such have greater accountability. It is unclear how accountability would be addressed for third party contractors. Use of a third party potentially leaves the door open to abuse

Any proposal to transport people experiencing a mental health crisis must also address a mechanism for statewide standards to be incorporated in these contracts. Potentially the Department of Health Services could have the role of developing these standards with input from legal advocates and peers. These important safeguards must be in place to ensure that transport occurs in a manner that protects the rights of people experiencing a mental health crisis and is safe and human. Longer term, the best option is to develop more local crisis resources so fewer people need to be transported, and can instead access services in their own community, closer to family and friends, and natural supports.

Thank you for your consideration of these informational comments.

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