



WISCONSIN FAMILY ACTION
Marriage|Family|Life|Liberty

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Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 57
Assembly Committee on Public Benefits Reform
Public Hearing, April 11, 2017
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President, Wisconsin Family Action

Thank you, Chairman Krug and committee members, for the opportunity to submit in writing the testimony I gave today before the committee in support of Assembly Bill 57.

Wisconsin Family Action (WFA) believes the very best environment for children is to live with their married mother and father. Unfortunately, that gold standard is not reality for very child. In situations where the child's best interest has already been sacrificed too often on the altar of adult desires through divorce or unwed child birth, we believe it is important that children be as closely tied to their biological parents as possible, assuming parental rights have not been terminated for good reason.

Further, Wisconsin Family Action believes our citizens are much better off, and as a result, our entire state is much better off when our citizens are independent of government. Public benefit programs can, if not managed very carefully,, keep people from becoming independent, but rather contributing to keeping people in poverty by not requiring some measure of personal responsibility..To this point, Governor Walker has said recently he believes public benefits should be a trampoline, not a hammock.

Wisconsin Family Action believes Assembly Bill 57, authored by Rep. Sanfelippo and Sen. Kapenga, helps with both of what I just laid out. It is a bill about acknowledging and accepting responsibility as a parent of a child in at least two ways: paternity and related child support. The idea behind the bill is that custodial or non-custodial parents who wish to receive FoodShare benefits need to cooperate in determining paternity, establishing or enforcing a child support order, and being no more than 3 months in arrears on child support. These requirements are reasonable and are about the best interest of the child.

The fastest way for a woman or a child to experience poverty is for them to be involved in a divorce or unwed childbirth. Some of this poverty experience can be alleviated if the biological father of the child is known and then held accountable for, at a minimum, contributing to the financial needs of the child through child support. Public benefits should not "reward" bad behavior, particularly when minor children are involved. (While the preceding focuses on non-custodial fathers, the reality is a woman, whether custodial or non-custodial, guilty of obstructing a support order or being delinquent in child support, would also be denied FoodShares under this bill.)

WFA does not see AB 57 as punitive but rather as an appropriate push towards parental responsibility by a reasonable withholding of a public benefit. Public benefits doled out without requirements become hammocks rather than trampolines.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this bill. Wisconsin Family Action urges the committee to pass AB 57 and move it to the full Assembly for a floor vote.

Publications I referred to in my remarks and responses to questions are available online.

Wisconsin Family Council's [*Wisconsin's Cultural Indicators, 2014 Edition*](#)

[*The Family Prosperity Index \(2017 edition\)*](#)

[*Wisconsin Family Prosperity Report \(2016\)*](#)