

Evers says he stands behind Crim despite 2005 child abuse charge

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Gov. Tony Evers says he stands by Dawn Crim, his choice to lead the Department of Safety and Professional Services, despite a more than decade-old child abuse charge.

Evers told reporters Tuesday he didn't know about the 2005 charge, which was later dismissed, when she joined the Department of Public Instruction in 2017 following a stint at the UW System. But it surfaced during the vetting process before she was named as a cabinet secretary, the gov said.

Praising Crim as an "extraordinary human being," Evers said Tuesday at UW-Madison the charge wasn't substantiated and added he's looking "forward to her having the opportunity to talk to the Legislature."

Evers' comments came after the Wisconsin State Journal first reported Monday on the case, in which Crim was charged with reckless physical abuse of a child after she repeatedly poked her 5-year-old son's hand with a pen, causing it to bleed. The charge was eventually dismissed and is no longer on the state's online court records system.

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Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, called the news "deeply unsettling" in a statement, adding it would "almost assuredly raise questions from members of my caucus surrounding the secretary's ability to serve in that role."

The Senate Public Benefits, Licensing and State-Federal Relations Committee, which Sen. Chris Kapenga chairs, originally scheduled a confirmation hearing for Crim today. But the Delafield Republican's office Monday afternoon pushed it back to March 13.

Kapenga's office said the delay stemmed from a scheduling conflict, rather than knowledge of the child abuse charge. A spokesman said the committee is still plans to proceed next week with the confirmation hearing.

The incident, according to the criminal complaint, happened after Crim's son poked a classmate with a pencil during school. School officials sent a note to his parents, and Crim in the complaint said after she read the message, she picked up a pen on her son's desk and poked his hand with it four times.

The child said the incident had hurt him and caused his hand to bleed and him to cry, per the complaint, and a teacher at school the next day noticed the bandages on Crim's son's hand.

The case was eventually dismissed following a deferred prosecution agreement, per court records reviewed by WisPolitics.com.

During the time of the incident, Crim was working as UW-Madison's assistant to the director for community relations, according to the university's School of Education release in 2017 announcing her move to DPI.

See the criminal complaint:

https://www.wispolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/-190305CriminalComplaint_Crim.pdf

See more on her bio:

<https://www.education.wisc.edu/soe/news-events/news/2017/-05/15/school-of-education-s-crim-accepts-leadership-post-with-wisconsin-dpi>