

Sen. Jacque: Sen. Jacque bill protecting vulnerable adults clears committee

Posted on Friday, Jan 14, 2022

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MADISON, WI... Vulnerable members of our society that have been targeted by criminals would receive stronger protections under a proposal that cleared the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety by a strong bi-partisan 6-1 vote this week.

“This proposal will enhance our adults-at-risk legal framework by adding more protections that will help ensure safe, fulfilling lives for the defenseless ones among us,” said State Sen. André Jacque (R-De Pere), lead author of the measure with Rep. Chuck Wichgers (R-Muskego).

Sen. Jacque said Wisconsin has a longstanding definition of “adult at risk”, which refers to any adult who has a physical or mental condition that substantially impairs his or her ability to care for his or her needs and who has experienced, is currently experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or financial exploitation. Unfortunately, there remain a number of protections currently lacking under state law for adults at risk, which Senate Bill 388 will institute:

- Allowing prosecutors to request that a court freeze or seize assets from a defendant who has been charged with a financial exploitation crime when the victim is an adult at risk in order to preserve them for restitution.
- Allowing an adult at risk who is seeking a domestic violence, individual-at-risk, or harassment restraining order to appear in a court hearing by telephone or live audiovisual means.
- Increasing the penalty for forcible sexual misconduct that is currently a second degree sexual assault to a first degree sexual assault (going from a Class C to

a Class B Felony) if the victim is an adult at risk.

- Allowing a term of imprisonment that is imposed for a criminal conviction to be increased in length if the crime victim was an adult at risk.

“Adults with disabilities are seven times more likely to be the victims of abuse, neglect, or exploitation,” Sen. Jacque said, noting that the bill is strongly supported by the Wisconsin Alzheimer’s Association and Wisconsin Chapter of A-TEAM, a grassroots network of families who work legislatively to advance the cause of people with disabilities in the workplace, society, and home.

This stronger adults-at-risk legislation is Sen. Jacque’s latest effort to protect our most vulnerable. Last month, Gov. Evers signed a Jacque bill requiring training for guardianship, the most restrictive legal arrangement for incapacitated adults, to make sure decisions are made in their best interests.

The measure (Senate Bill 388) must now pass the full Senate and Assembly and be signed by the Governor to become law.