

Sen. Agard, Rep. Anderson: Introduce anti-SLAPP legislation

Posted on Wednesday, Aug 23, 2023

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MADISON - More than 30 other states have enacted anti-SLAPP legislation in order to prevent baseless and frivolous lawsuits with the intention of silencing or intimidating critics, activists, journalists and others. Today, Senate Democratic Leader Melissa Agard introduced Anti-SLAPP legislation with Representative Jimmy Anderson (D-Fitchburg) in light of recent events in Wisconsin. Senate Democratic Leader Melissa Agard (D-Madison) and Representative Anderson released the following statements:

Senator Agard:

“Today, my colleagues and I are introducing legislation that honors the First Amendment and protects the media’s ability to report on matters of public concern without undue legal pressure and extraordinary financial costs because of a meritless lawsuit.

“SLAPP lawsuits are a weapon used by the powerful and well-connected in an attempt to intimidate or censor critics, activists, journalists and others with a stifling financial burden. It is shameful that my Republican colleague State Senator Cory Tomczyk (R-Mosinee) has chosen to rely on this strategy in order to silence a local newspaper that reported his homophobic and inappropriate actions.

“A strong, unfettered press is essential for a strong, healthy democracy and is crucial for maintaining a well-informed citizenry.

Representative Anderson:

“All Wisconsinites must be free to speak out on matters of public interest without fear of baseless and costly legal retaliation. By providing people with the ability to

dismiss lawsuits that are designed to intimidate and harass them, this bill presents an opportunity to protect our fundamental First Amendment rights against those who use the legal system as a weapon. Speech will never be truly free in Wisconsin as long as the powerful can shield themselves from criticism by wielding bogus legal threats against citizens, journalists, or media representatives that wish to hold them accountable and pursue the truth to the fullest extent.”