

Sen. James: Celebrates signing of emergency contact bill into law

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Madison – Today, Governor Evers signed SB 35 into law, creating Wisconsin Act 57. The legislation, authored by Sen. Jesse James (R-Altoona) and Rep. Loren Oldenburg (R-Viroqua), creates an opt-in emergency contact feature with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. Soon, Wisconsin residents will be able to provide an emergency contact assigned to their driver's license or ID card, enabling first responders to connect loved ones more easily.

This legislation has been implemented in other states, including Florida, where Milwaukee native Christine Olson worked hard to see it put into place after a tragic family loss. Christine wasn't notified for 6 ½ hours that her teenage daughter Tiffany had been killed in a motorcycle accident only 15 minutes away from her home. Deciding that no family should go through this additional trauma, Christine advocated for emergency contact legislation to be put into place in Florida, and eventually 15 other states.

“Coincidentally, tomorrow marks 18 years since Tiffany's death. Sometimes hope comes on the heels of someone else's pain. I am glad that this legislation – which I believe is hope for Wisconsin – will prevent my story from becoming someone else's story. This feature will change stories and change lives,” said Christine Olson.

The bill text provides the Department of Transportation a six month window to develop and implement the program. Sen. James, who works part-time as a police officer, added, “Once our DOT opens this feature, Wisconsinites will be able to easily add an emergency contact online. My experience in law enforcement has shown me that every moment matters, and this will help us immensely. We are thrilled that this legislation has been signed into law so that we can help minimize the suffering and confusion of these types of emergency situations.”