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WCA Applauds Additional Child Welfare Funding Approved by JCF
Commends Governor Walker and Administration for Efforts

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) is applauding today's vote by the Joint Committee on Finance (JCF) to increase child welfare funding by \$5 million annually, beginning in CY18.

"Increased heroin, opioid and methamphetamine usage in Wisconsin is contributing to additional child welfare referrals/out-of-home care placements. The workload of county child welfare caseworkers has been increasing with the addition of CPS referrals," said WCA Executive Director Mark D. O'Connell. "Today's action will help to put more county social workers in place to deal with these tough cases."

The number of child welfare referrals has increased by 36.8 percent from 2007-2015. In addition, the number of children in out-of-home care has increased by 8 percent, from 2011-2015. Prior to 2011, the number of children in out-of-home placements was decreasing.

The Governor's Task Force on Opioid Abuse recommended additional state resources for Children and Family Aids to help counties hire the social work staff they need to care for the additional victims of the opioid epidemic - children and family members.

"The stress of increased workloads is taking its toll on child welfare workers as well," said O'Connell. "Many experienced workers are leaving the profession due to the stress and complexity of parental substance abuse cases."

O'Connell concluded, "We are grateful to Governor Walker and today's action by the JCF to ensure counties have sufficient resources to keep children safe in our communities. The essence of government is to keep our most vulnerable protected and this additional funding will help counties to reach even more in need."

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