



ANDRÉ JACQUE

STATE SENATOR • 1ST SENATE DISTRICT

Phone: (608) 266-3512

Fax: (608) 282-3541

Sen.Jacque@legis.wi.gov

State Capitol • P.O. Box 7882

Madison, WI 53707-7882

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Contact: Senator André Jacques

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(608) 266-3512

“ETHAN’S LAW” PASSES SENATE

Sen. Jacques’s proposal honors the memory of Ethan Hauschultz by protecting children at risk from dangerous placements

MADISON... Children in protective care would no longer be subject to placement with admitted child abusers under “Ethan Law,” which cleared the state Senate today in a unanimous voice vote.

State Sen. André Jacques (R-De Pere), primary author of the bi-partisan measure along with State Rep. Paul Tittl, said the bill closes loopholes in state law that allowed Ethan Hauschultz, a seven-year-old Manitowoc boy, to be killed in April 2018 after suffering a pattern of cruel abuse at the home where he had been lawfully placed by county workers, despite a lengthy record of violence by his designated ‘caregiver’.

“What happened to Ethan is unbelievably tragic,” Sen. Jacques said. “If the loopholes didn’t exist, Ethan and his two siblings could not have been placed in this home, and presumably Ethan would still be alive today. The system failed him, and we owe it to his memory to put proper guidelines in place.”

Due to neglect in their home, the children were placed with a great uncle who had been found guilty of felony child abuse in 2009, among several other violent past offenses. But because of a plea bargain, his record showed the conviction as disorderly conduct, a non-violent misdemeanor.

Under Sen. Jacques’s bill, human services workers could not place a child with any adult who had been found guilty of abusing a child, entered a plea of “no contest” to a child-abuse charge, or plea-bargained that crime down to a lesser offense.

“Red flags were everywhere - this gap in the law basically took Ethan’s life,” Sen. Jacques said. “Wisconsin needs to protect children and establish a clear standard for Child Protective Services to avoid removing children from a dangerous situation only to put them immediately back in harm’s way.”

“Ethan’s senseless, preventable murder highlights the vulnerability of our children,” Sen. Jacques said. “The law needs to safeguard their welfare when the adults who are supposed to fail to do so.”

Ethan’s Law (Senate Bill 24) now heads to the state Assembly.

Senator André Jacques represents Northeast Wisconsin’s First Senate District, consisting of Door and Kewaunee Counties and portions of Brown, Calumet, Manitowoc, and Outagamie counties.

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