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CONTACT: Kathy Markeland, [kmarkeland@wafca.org](mailto:kmarkeland@wafca.org)

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608.257.5939

## Passage of Assembly Bill 686 – Licensing Requirements for Master’s Level Social Workers

Today the Wisconsin State Senate passed Assembly Bill 686 to streamline the licensing and certification criteria for master’s level mental health professionals. The action by the State Senate will allow master’s level social workers to provide substance use treatment within their scope of practice.

In responding to the final passage of AB 686, WAFCA Executive Director Kathy Markeland thanked Representative Patrick Snyder (R-Schofield) and Senator Dale Kooyenga (R-Brookfield) for leading a bipartisan effort. “AB 686 is common sense legislation that will create greater consistency in credentialing master’s level mental health practitioners in Wisconsin. Many individuals in need of substance use treatment also experience co-occurring mental health disorders. AB 686 recognizes the professional responsibility of master’s level social workers and their clinical supervisors to responsibly treat the needs of their clients – needs which may include mental illness, trauma, and substance use disorder.”

“Mental health and substance use treatment needs have soared during the pandemic,” Markeland emphasized, “and we look forward to continued attention from the legislature this session to address the regulatory barriers and lack of staff available to expeditiously credential our mental health workforce. We are facing a mental health crisis and we need to streamline processes with bills like AB 686 and also invest in the Department of Safety and Professional Services to keep expanding our mental health workforce.”

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***WAFCA** is a member association that works to improve the lives of families and children in Wisconsin. Our member agencies provide a wide array of prevention and supportive services such as foster care, in-home support, counseling, and mental health treatment. WAFCA represents over 50 child and family serving agencies and leaders in the field and advocates for the more than 200,000 individuals and families that they serve each year.*