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### **WAFCA Affirms Prevention Focus in Task Force Recommendations**

In a press conference today, the Assembly Speaker's Foster Care Task Force announced introduction of a package of funding and policy proposals to support Wisconsin children and families at risk of child abuse and neglect and to support the caregivers and caseworkers responsible for those touched by Wisconsin's child welfare system.

"WAFCA appreciated the opportunity to work with the Task Force in recent months as they sought input regarding the pressing needs facing Wisconsin's foster care system. From the earliest stages of the Task Force, WAFCA emphasized the importance of investing additional resources in prevention services and we are pleased that some of the Task Force recommendations embrace an early intervention strategy," observed WAFCA Executive Director Linda Hall.

Key proposals of interest to WAFCA include:

- New \$1 million prevention services fund to support innovative programming proposals from state, county and/or nonprofit providers;
- UW System and WI Technical College system tuition remission for certain youth who have experienced an episode of care in the foster care system;
- Grant funding to support foster parent retention efforts and normalcy for children in care;
- A pilot effort to expand access to legal counsel for parents involved in a CHIPS proceeding; and
- A provision enabling providers to receive targeted mental health information regarding children in their care.

"The Task Force hearings highlighted the complex challenges facing Wisconsin's families and the wide array of stakeholders who are responsible for identifying the best interests of each child in the foster care system and developing supports to promote their safety and well-being," continued Hall.

"We are pleased to see that a number of the priorities that we identified through the statewide hearings are receiving attention through this package of proposals. WAFCA looks forward to supporting these key initiatives as they advance through the next phase of the legislative process."

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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 250,000 individuals and families that they serve each year.*