



**TO:** Assembly Committee on Children & Families  
**FROM:** Jodi Bloch, Director of State & Local Government Relations  
**DATE:** Wednesday, November 5, 2025  
**RE:** Support for SB 491 – Video monitoring and recording in youth residential care centers, group homes and shelter care facilities

Chair Snyder and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share written remarks in support of AB 491. We appreciate Representative Dittrich and Senator James for authoring this proposal, as well as the other co-sponsors of this bill.

Children's Wisconsin is the region's only independent health care system dedicated solely to the health and well-being of kids. As such, we offer a wide array of programs and services inside our hospitals (inpatients and outpatient) and clinic walls and out in our communities. Children's reach in the community includes the work of Milwaukee Children's child well-being teams that contract with the Division of Milwaukee County Child Protective Services (DMCPS) to provide foster care and adoptive care services. In 2024, our DMCPS-contracted child welfare program served 1,400 children and their families. In addition to ensuring child safety and timely permanence, our child welfare program also has responsibility for placement matching for the approximately 780 children and youth we currently have placed in out of home care, securing placement resources to meet their assessed level of need.

In serving kids and families engaged with child protective services, we understand that sometimes the most appropriate placement option for a youth may be in a youth residential treatment center to meet their treatment needs. Children's has supported the ability of future youth psychiatric residential treatment facilities (PRTFs) in Wisconsin to be able to use video monitoring and recording and have witnessed the added level of safety, protection and accountability that they provide for both youth and caregivers. For example, a youth was being served in a facility out of state where video recording was allowed. There was an altercation between the youth and a staff member where it was hard to determine what had actually transpired. The video recording was a critical part of the investigation and the staff member was able to be held accountable and faced criminal charges. Children's has also heard from residential care facilities that some youth have required additional staff on hand because of previous unsubstantiated accusations made against caregivers, thereby increasing the patient to caregiver staffing ratio. Having monitored video and recordings can also protect caregivers and may help alleviate some of the extra staffing burden and staff cost for these particular circumstances.

In addition to enhancing client and caregiver safety, video monitoring and recording can also serve as a training tool and expedite the investigation process if an incident occurs. This matters because alleged caregiver maltreaters are not able to work pending an investigation. Decreased staffing can jeopardize residential treatment facilities' ability to serve other kids in need of residential treatment within the community. Children's urges Wisconsin to allow the use of cameras in these additional youth residential care settings, like in the newly enacted youth PRTFs and as implemented by many other states, which will allow an even greater level of protection for youth and caregivers. Thank you for your consideration of support for SB 485. Please reach out if you have any questions.

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*Children's Wisconsin (Children's) serves children and families in every county across the state. We have inpatient hospitals in Milwaukee and the Fox Valley. We care for every part of a child's health, from critical care at one of our hospitals, to routine checkups in our primary care clinics. Children's also provides specialty care, urgent care, emergency care, dental care, school health nurses, foster care and adoption services, family resource centers, child health advocacy, health education, family preservation and support, mental health services, pediatric medical research and the statewide poison hotline.*