

Scott Walker  
Governor



Shel Gross  
Chairperson

Mary Neubauer  
Vice-Chairperson

State of Wisconsin

**Wisconsin Council on Mental Health**

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**Date:** January 27, 2014

**To:** Senate Committee on Education

**From:** Shel Gross, Chair   
Wisconsin Council on Mental Health

**Subject:** SB451

Thank you for holding a public hearing on SB451.

I am writing to express the support of the Wisconsin Council on Mental Health (WCMH) for SB451/AB570. The WCMH is the Governor's statutorily authorized advisory council on mental health. Statutes empower the WCMH to advise the Governor, Legislature and state agencies on mental health budget and policy issues. At its January 15, 2014 meeting the WCMH supported a recommendation from its Children and Youth Committee to support SB451/AB570.

Wisconsin has a number of youth in out-of-home care that do not transition to a permanent home but instead age out of the child welfare system at age 18 or at age 19, if the child is a full-time student in high school. Youth who age out of the child welfare system are more likely to encounter challenges such as lack of housing, lack of a job and lack of resources to post-secondary education. The bill will allow a child with an individualized education plan to remain in out-of-home care until the age of 21 or a high school diploma or its equivalent is obtained. We believe that this bill could positively impact the health and welfare of those students who are in this situation and who have emotional disturbances.

We urge your support of this legislation.