



Samantha J. Kerkman

State Representative • Serving the 66th Assembly District

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Representative Kerkman Issues Statement on Wisconsin Shares Audit

Madison – Today, the Legislative Audit Bureau released its findings from the completion of the second phase of its year-long audit of the Wisconsin Shares program. According to Representative Samantha Kerkman, a member of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee which requested the audit, “The taxpayers have every right to be outraged by what the audit bureau found.”

The audit revealed at least eight instances in which felons and other individuals with records of child abuse and neglect were either employed by or living in child care facilities. These particular findings were shared with officials at the Department of Children and Families (DCF) who “believe that no children have been harmed” at this time. Additionally, the audit bureau identified 317 individuals participating in Wisconsin Shares whose past criminal offenses require a more in-depth investigation. The report also indicates that operators of 184 licensed and 20 certified child care facilities were overdue for criminal background checks as of June 30, 2009. Of these facilities, 42.9 percent are located in Milwaukee County.

The grim results also shed light on a random sample of 100 facilities with attendance record citations, meaning the operators of these facilities did not maintain accurate records. It was discovered that 42 percent of the licensed and 82 percent of the certified facilities had not been assessed for payment errors despite the fact that they had been cited for inaccurate attendance records. The report also indicated that over the past five years nearly 2,000 licensed child care facilities were sanctioned by DCF for “serious or persistent violations of child care rules.” Three out of the four licensed facilities that were issued 16 or more sanctions for rules violations were still in operation as of November 2009.

The list goes on.

“In tracking the progress the audit bureau has made over the past year, it continues to amaze me how a \$350 million-per-year program could be so poorly managed for so long,” said Rep. Kerkman. “This program has proven to be a tragic waste of millions of taxpayer dollars, and the safety of the children enrolled was seriously jeopardized. I hope that when my colleagues on the audit committee and I meet to discuss this audit that we can bring forward some serious bipartisan changes and tougher penalties in reforming Wisconsin Shares. We cannot afford to just sweep the problems with this program under the rug anymore.”

It was also reported by the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* this week that at least 16 child care centers have been linked to drug dealers, particularly in the city of Milwaukee. Police records collected by the paper indicate several instances where providers or live-in boyfriends were arrested for possession of drugs such as cocaine, ecstasy, and marijuana. One Milwaukee police officer said that in at least 25 percent of the drug cases he has dealt with, the offender is involved with a day care provider.

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