



TO: Senate Committee on Health
FROM: Charles “Barry” Rothschild, MD, Attending Physician, Pediatric Critical Care & Palliative Care Medicine, and Associate Medical Director, Provider Well-Being, Children’s Wisconsin
DATE: Wednesday, March 12, 2025
RE: Support for SB 39, SA 1 – Establishment of a Palliative Care Council, Senate Amendment 1

On behalf of Children’s Wisconsin, I appreciate the opportunity to offer written comments in support of SB 39 and Senate Amendment 1. I am Dr. Barry Rothschild, Attending Physician, Pediatric Critical Care & Palliative Care Medicine, and Associate Medical Director, Provider Well-Being, at Children’s Wisconsin. Children’s Wisconsin’s (Children’s) appreciates Senator James and Representative Snyder for their leadership in authoring this proposal, and especially appreciate their willingness to introduce Senate Amendment 1 to include a pediatric specialist as part of the membership of the palliative care council.

At Children’s Wisconsin, we are dedicated to the health and well-being of kids and their families. In my practice, this includes caring for children with serious, life-limiting or life-threatening illnesses with a focus on improving their quality of life and supporting their physical, mental and emotional well-being. My team and I provide family-centered, compassionate care alongside other specialists involved in the child’s care to develop a care plan that is specific to each child’s needs and treatment goals. We promote comfort, love, hope and dignity and empower children and families to make their health care decisions. At Children’s, many of our patients have serious or life-threatening illnesses. We help them manage their pain or physical symptoms, understand and cope with their circumstance, and offer compassionate support and connection to resources.

SB 39 outlines members of the proposed palliative care council, including approximately a dozen health care professionals. Senate Amendment 1 proposes including a pediatric palliative care physician as one of the 5 physician members of the council. As is true across pediatric specialty care, kids are not just little adults. Kids with life-limiting or life-threatening conditions and those nearing end-of-life are often best served by those with pediatric palliative expertise. In fact, our patients and families, especially those living in rural areas, often struggle to find community-based palliative care and hospice services as many adult providers aren’t comfortable or familiar with serving children and their families.

Understandably, many of the health care professionals on the proposed palliative care council focus on serving adult populations, however I believe including a pediatric palliative care physician on the council would provide insight and value in their work to advise the Department of Health Services about palliative care issues. I especially appreciated the legislation’s aim to consider concurrent care – the economic and quality of life effectiveness of palliative care that is provided along with curative treatment. In pediatrics, we have deep experience with concurrent care, specifically hospice care at the same time as curative treatment. A pediatric palliative care physician will bring important expertise and perspectives to this and many topics, to help represent children facing unimaginable circumstances and the providers who care for them. The proposed council could be impactful in working to improve palliative care and hospice access for all Wisconsinites, including our kids and their families.

Thank you for the opportunity to share Children's Wisconsin's perspectives on the importance of Senate Amendment 1. We are happy to answer any questions through our contact information listed below.

Barry Rothschild, MD

Attending Physician, Pediatric Critical Care & Palliative Care Medicine

Associate Medical Director, Provider Well-Being

Children's Wisconsin

crothschild@mcw.edu

Jodi Bloch

Director, State & Local Government Relations

Children's Wisconsin

jbloch@childrenswi.org

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.