



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Tony Evers, Governor
Kirsten L. Johnson, Secretary

July 9, 2026

The Honorable Rachael Cabral-Guevara
Chair, Senate Committee on Health Room
323 South, State Capitol
PO Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707

The Honorable Clint P. Moses
Chair, Assembly Committee on Health, Aging
and Long-Term Care
Room 12 West, State Capitol PO Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708

The Honorable Patrick Testin
Vice-Chair, Senate Committee on Health
Room 8 South, State Capitol,
PO Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707

The Honorable Robert Brooks
Vice-Chair, Assembly Committee on Health,
Aging and Long-Term Care
Room 216 North, State Capitol PO Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Senators and Representatives:

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) is pleased to submit to you, as required by Wis. Stat. §253.115, the annual report on the status of Universal Newborn Hearing Screening in Wisconsin. In 2023, 100% of hospitals with birthing facilities and most licensed homebirth providers continued to universally offer hearing loss screening for babies. Of the 59,739 Wisconsin births, 59,398 babies had newborn screening records in 2023, and 58,110 of those babies (97.8%) were screened for hearing loss. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that the refer rate – the percentage of infants who do not pass the inpatient hearing screening in one or both ears and require a referral for additional testing – be below 4.0%. For babies born in 2023, Wisconsin's refer rate was 2.5%.

Hearing loss is the most common congenital birth defect, affecting an approximately 150 babies annually in Wisconsin. Hearing loss is considered to be a neurodevelopmental emergency. Left undetected and therefore untreated, hearing loss impedes speech, language, cognitive, and social development. The Wisconsin Sound Beginnings (WSB) Program continues to make progress toward meeting its goal of ensuring that hearing screening is available to 100% of babies born in Wisconsin and to ensure that appropriate services are provided to children who do not pass their hearing screens.

The WSB Program is improving all areas of early hearing detection and intervention through a variety of activities and partnerships to promote a sound beginning for Wisconsin's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Kirsten Johnson".

Kirsten L. Johnson
Secretary-designee

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