



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Scott Walker, Governor
Linda Seemeyer, Secretary

August 31, 2018

Honorable Kathleen Bernier
Vice-Chair, Committee on Health
Room 314 North
State Capitol
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Representative Bernier:

The Department of Health Services is pleased to submit to you, as required by Wis. Stat. § 253.115, the annual report on the status of Universal Newborn Hearing Screening (UNHS) in Wisconsin. In 2016, 100% of hospitals with birthing facilities had an implemented hearing screening program and the majority of licensed homebirth providers also had implemented universal hearing screening in their practices. Of the 66,015 babies with newborn screening records born in Wisconsin in 2016, 65,306 babies (99%) were screened for hearing loss and 480 (0.7%) refused newborn hearing screening. The percentage of infants who were referred for additional testing after not passing the initial hearing screening was 3%, which falls within the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation of less than 4%.

Hearing loss is the most common congenital birth defect, affecting an estimated 150 babies annually in Wisconsin. If hearing loss is left undetected, it will impede speech, language, cognitive, and social development. The Wisconsin Sound Beginnings Program continues to make progress toward meeting its goal of ensuring that 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 Wisconsin Sound Beginnings Program is improving all areas of early hearing detection and intervention through a variety of activities and working with its partners in other agencies to promote a sound beginning for Wisconsin's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Linda Seemeyer".

Linda Seemeyer
Secretary