



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Tony Evers, Governor
Andrea Palm, Secretary

August 8, 2019

Senator Dale Kooyenga
Vice-Chair, Committee on Health and Human Services
Room 310 South
State Capitol
Madison, WI 53707


Dear Senator Kooyenga:

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 2017, 100% of the hospitals with birthing facilities and the majority of licensed homebirth providers continued to universally screen babies for hearing loss. Of the 64,556 babies with newborn screening records born in Wisconsin in 2017, 63,760 babies (99%) were screened for hearing loss and 531 (0.8%) refused newborn hearing screening. The statewide referral rate for initial screenings in 2017 was 2.07%, 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 (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 working with its partners in other agencies to promote a sound beginning for Wisconsin's children.

Sincerely,


Andrea Palm
Secretary - designee