WCASA Statement on LAB Audit of Crime Victim and Witness Assistance Surcharge

In response to the release of the Legislative Audit Bureau review of the Crime Victim and Witness Assistance Surcharge, the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault makes the following statement:

We first want to commend the Legislative Audit Bureau staff who were tasked with analyzing what is clearly a cumbersome and almost baffling process used in Wisconsin to fund critical services for victims of sexual assault. In a short amount of time, LAB auditors were able to understand and clearly describe the many problems associated with providing critical victim services through such a jumble of administrative steps.

Depending on a number of factors, the surcharge is collected by the court system, the Department of Corrections or the Department of Health Services. The crime victims programs funded through the surcharge are then administered by the Department of Justice, and are provided on the ground by counties and local sexual assault service agencies around the state.

Because of this complexity and the inconsistent nature of surcharge payments in general, problems are bound to persist.

We also want to applaud the response by the Department of Justice, the agency tasked with administering the critical programs funded through this surcharge. The Attorney General clearly understands the value of these programs and we echo his statements in which he calls for more stable sources of funding in the future and a simplification of the process.
The current process is inefficient, error-prone, wasteful of resources, and impossible to predict.

We propose removing the Sexual Assault Victim Services Program from the surcharge appropriations and funding those critical services for rape victims solely with General Purpose Revenue, thereby stabilizing funding levels for that critical program as well as streamlining the remaining process significantly.

The Legislative Audit Bureau’s report can be found at:
http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lab/reports/12-13full.pdf