



PRESS RELEASE

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Rural Wisconsin Initiative Priorities Receive Funding in the Budget *Joint Finance Committee Helps Rural Communities Improve Health Care Access*

Madison, WI – Yesterday, the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) voted to fund three Rural Wisconsin Initiative (RWI) proposals that will increase access to health care in rural areas. The proposals increase funding for the Wisconsin Rural Physician Residency Assistance Program (WRPRAP) by \$200,000 over the biennium, and create two \$1 million matching grant programs for the training of Advanced Practice Clinicians and for the training of Allied Health Professionals.

The WRPRAP funding, which was included in the Governor’s initial budget, closely mirrors a RWI bill from last session authored by Rep. Ed Brooks (R-Reedsburg), Rep. Kathy Bernier (R-Chippewa Falls), and Sen. Tom Tiffany (R-Hazelhurst). The funding provision for the Advanced Practice Clinician training was based on legislation authored by Rep. Romaine Quinn (R-Rice Lake), Rep. Deb Kolste (D-Janesville), Sen. Patrick Testin (R-Stevens Point), and Sen. Sheila Harsdorf (R-River Falls). Funding for Allied Health Professional training was first proposed by Rep. Ed Brooks, Rep. Romaine Quinn, Sen. Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green), and Sen. Patrick Testin.

“This was a real team effort that resulted in a big win for rural Wisconsin,” said Sen. Testin. “Sen. Marklein, Sen. Vukmir, Rep. Felzkowski, and the other nine members of the JFC who supported these provisions deserve credit for prioritizing rural health care access.”

“Thursday’s budget provisions will mean real improvements for rural residents,” added Rep. Quinn. “The RWI motions that were added to the budget will increase the talent pool of nurses and support staff that keep hospitals running smoothly. I and the other 25 members of the RWI in the Assembly worked hard for these additions, and are thrilled with their inclusion. Of special note is the work that Rep. Ed Brooks has done. Despite his recent cancer diagnosis, he has remained at the forefront, pushing for these bills, and even writing letters from his hospital room. Rural Wisconsin couldn’t ask for a more dedicated champion.”

For more information on the proposals and supporters of the RWI, please visit www.RuralWisconsinInitiative.com.

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