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Mental Health Education is a Necessary Proactive Approach to School Safety

MILWAUKEE, WI – Rep. David Crowley (D-Milwaukee) issued the following statement calling on the designation of school safety funds allocated by the Wisconsin Legislature during the March 2018 Special Session to mental health education.

“Given the recent increase in school safety funding, Wisconsin has a unique opportunity to serve as a model for the rest of the nation on how to proactively respond to potential school violence and youth mental health challenges. Designating funds from the \$100 million allocated to school safety to allow school districts to update health curriculum to include mental health in its definition and purview is a necessary step to eliminating the stigma of mental illnesses and would play a pivotal role in heading off violence before it occurs. We must recognize the need to create a comprehensive mental health curriculum plan as a key component of ensuring a safe learning environment for Wisconsin’s students.

“Suicide represents the second highest cause of death for Americans between the ages of 15 and 24, having led to over 5,700 deaths in this age group alone in 2016. Furthermore, the nation has recently witnessed a number of violent incidents, many of which have occurred in schools and involved people with undiagnosed or untreated mental illnesses. While the school safety funds currently can be allocated to responding to mental health crises, we must expand this to cover the proper education of the students. The state’s approach to resolving this crisis should begin with the understanding that with the proper education, many mental illnesses can be identified and treated before violence occurs.

“Virginia and New York recently became the first states to enact legislation mandating mental health education in their school systems. While I believe this is the direction that Wisconsin must move in, we are in a unique position to immediately allow school districts to allocate funds towards mental health education and inevitably make our schools safer.”

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