



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Assembly Republican Representatives call for Veto Override on Mental Health Care Initiatives

Madison...Republican Representatives Paul Tittl (R–Manitowoc), Joe Sanfelippo (R–New Berlin), John Jagler (R–Watertown), Romaine Quinn (R–Barron), Pat Snyder (R–Schofield) and Nancy VanderMeer (R–Tomah) are calling on Governor Tony Evers to prioritize the mental health needs of the state of Wisconsin.

Legislators claim the governor has repeatedly shown his lack of support for mental health care with his multiple budget vetoes. Although he says Wisconsin needs to expand welfare and accept federal Medicaid dollars, putting more people on welfare, he isn't willing to spend the money the legislature invested to care for the mental health needs of people already on it. They are asking colleagues to consider a veto override this fall.

"Governor Evers is turning his back on the mental health needs of our state. He chose to veto roughly \$30 million the legislature directed to mental health care," Rep. Paul Tittl said. "He vetoed another \$30 million that could have been used to improve access to mental, behavioral, and substance abuse treatment and other health care in the state, saying the funding was unnecessary."

Additionally, the governor vetoed \$15 million in the capital budget that would have funded the establishment of a much needed mental health crisis center in northern Wisconsin. Instead, the governor redirects that money to a facility in Madison, ignoring the needs of people in rural areas of our state.

"This project is vital to our community," said Rep. Romaine Quinn. "The costs in time and resources for police officers to transport people in the middle of mental health crises to facilities on the opposite sides of the state are a major drag on the finances of northwest Wisconsin. These beds would be a major improvement for both law enforcement and mental health in our communities."

"Republicans in the legislature provided critically needed funds to improve mental health care in Wisconsin," said Rep. Snyder. "Mental health reform is a priority for Assembly Republicans, and it should be a priority for all elected officials including the governor."

The governor's vetoes related to behavioral and mental health:

Increasing reimbursement rates for physician and behavioral health providers: \$24.7 million.

- The GOP budget set aside \$10M GPR in JFC appropriation to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for physician and behavioral health providers. Federal match brought total funding to \$24.7M.
- Evers vetoed the \$10 million GPR and with the resulting loss of federal match, cut \$24.7 million.

Grants to increase the number of credentialed providers for mental and behavioral health: \$1 million.

- The GOP budget included \$1 million for Qualified Treatment Trainee Grants to increase the number of providers credentialed in mental health and behavioral health.
- The Evers veto specifically removed the requirement that this money be used for mental health and behavioral health and instead created a million dollar slush fund for his administration to hand out, without restrictions, for salaries, benefits and supervision for anything they choose to define as 'treatment'.

Expanding access to mental and behavioral health services through telehealth: \$6.8 million.

- The GOP budget set aside \$2.7 million for an expansion of the use of telehealth services by Medicaid recipients – with an important goal of providing expanded access to mental and behavioral health services for low-income populations. The federal match on this money would have been an additional \$4 million.
- Evers said his administration did not need additional Medicaid money for this purpose, and rejected the \$6.8 million investment.

Hub and Spoke model for mental health and substance abuse treatment: \$900,000.

- The GOP budget provided \$89,900 GPR with a federal match of \$808,900 to develop a Hub-and-Spoke Treatment model to provide mental health and substance abuse treatment.
- Evers' veto again specified there were adequate Medicaid funds, rejecting the \$898,800 additional money.

Assembly Republicans have shown a commitment to mental health in the past. Speaker Vos' first task force was on mental health reform during 2013-2014. The bipartisan committee brought forward recommendations resulting in the most comprehensive mental health reforms in decades.

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