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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 70TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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Healthcare Access Remains Critical for Rural Wisconsin Residents

In the fall of 2015, my first term in the State Assembly, I shared a column related to some of the issues I was focused on tackling immediately, and how one of my primary goals was improving the quality of life for Wisconsinites, especially through increasing access to and better delivery of healthcare services. As a former hospital board member, this issue is especially near and dear to my heart.

In the 2015-2016 Legislative Session, I authored Assembly Bill 253, a bipartisan bill that passed in the Assembly with a vote total of 95-1 and was signed into law by the Governor in December of 2015. The bill enables Wisconsin to enter into an Interstate Medical Licensure Compact, which provides a new, expedited licensing option for physicians seeking to practice in multiple states. Previously, when a physician in another state wished to practice in Wisconsin, that physician needed to apply for and receive a medical license in Wisconsin.

The legislation addresses the regulatory burden that was placed on physicians with a desire to practice in Wisconsin by allowing for expedited multi-state licensing for physicians from states that also participate in the Compact within a matter of days, while still maintaining the integrity of our state's current medical standards and oversight over the practice of medicine and with no changes to the state's Medical Practice Act. Physicians licensed through the Compact will need to continue to comply with all laws, rules, and regulations of the state in which the patient is located, including here in Wisconsin.

The Interstate Medical Licensure Compact was launched officially on April 7. It has now become law in 18 states so far and proposals are moving forward in other legislatures in eight states across the country. Locally, the Compact has been heralded by leaders from Gunderson Health System and Mayo Clinic Health System-Franciscan Healthcare.

While I'm absolutely thrilled about the success of the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact, my work is not done and I continue to make it my mission to improve access for the rural residents of our state - especially access to healthcare services.

I'm delighted to share that the State Assembly Committee on Rural Development and Mining, of which I've been appointed Chairperson this session, will hold a public hearing this week Wednesday, May 3rd, at the State Capitol, on four pieces of proposed legislation with bi-partisan support, authored by my colleagues, that all focus on improving healthcare access in Wisconsin. The pieces of legislation are all part of the Rural Wisconsin Initiative, a legislative undertaking launched in January of 2016. The Rural



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Wisconsin Initiative involves a group of legislators from rural areas all across the state, determined to give Rural Wisconsin a voice in Madison.

Here are the pieces of legislation that the Rural Development and Mining Committee will take up on Wednesday:

Assembly Bill 222, Authored by Representative James Edming. Relating to: Grants for the creation of rural wellness facilities and programs.

Assembly Bill 224, Authored by Representative Ed Brooks. Relating to: Grants for education and training of allied health professionals.

Assembly Bill 227, Authored by Representative Romaine Quinn. Relating to: Training grants for advanced practice clinicians.

Assembly Bill 255, Authored by Representative Shannon Zimmerman. Relating to: Grants for quality improvement initiatives.

More information on these proposed pieces of legislation, or any other legislative activity happening this session can be found on the Wisconsin State Legislature Webpage: <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/>