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Representative Rob Stafsholt Appointed to Suicide Prevention Task Force

First hearing scheduled for April 24 in Madison

New Richmond – Representative Rob Stafsholt (R-New Richmond) has been appointed to the Suicide Prevention Task Force. The Task Force was created by Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R-Rochester), and it will hold hearings around the state to receive input from survivors, experts, advocates for suicide prevention, families who have been impacted, and community leaders.

“Suicide is an issue that has affected many families across the state, and I am deeply honored to be named to this vital task force,” said Representative Stafsholt. **“As legislators, we are tasked to create an environment where growth and self-sustainability are of the utmost importance. This task force will allow the public to interact with legislators, which will ensure that we are doing all we can to protect at-risk citizens.”**

According to statistics from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, more than 700 Wisconsinites die each year from suicide. Additionally, roughly 5,500 Wisconsin residents are hospitalized each year due to intentional, self-inflicted injury. In Wisconsin, suicide is the fourth leading cause of *years of potential life lost*, before age 65.

“After working with New Richmond School District Administrator Patrick Olson over the past couple years, I have a better understanding of the effects suicide can have on families, friends and neighbors,” said Representative Stafsholt. **“This is not an issue that we can take lightly. Every year, citizens of all ages and backgrounds are taken from us much too soon. I plan on using this platform to shed light on this issue, and hopefully find ways to prevent such actions in the future.”**

The members of the bipartisan task force, which will be co-chaired by Representative Joan Ballweg (R-Markesan) and Representative Steve Doyle (D-Onalaska) will be examining a variety of topics to combat this challenging, and unfortunate problem. The items the task force will be examining include:

- State resources and programs dedicated to suicide prevention and awareness
- Opportunities to target and assist at-risk individuals
- Ways to better harness the use of technology to reach and understand vulnerable populations
- The use of evidence-based programs and protocols
- The use of treatment of support service options and barriers that hinder individuals from receiving needed care

“I encourage the citizens of Northwest Wisconsin to share their story,” said Representative Stafsholt. **“The perspectives and ideas that are shared with my office will go a long way in raising awareness and assisting at-risk citizens. There are situations and hardships that many Wisconsinites live with. This is our chance to make a difference, and help those who truly need it.”**

The Suicide Prevention Task Force will hold hearings across the state, which will allow the members of our communities to share their thoughts on how to best address this issue. The first hearing will take place in Madison on April 24th. Recommendations by the Task Force are expected to be made by fall 2019. For more information, please visit: <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/2019/committees/assembly/suicideprevention>.