



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Suicide Prevention Task Force Recommendations Advance

Madison... Representative Joan Ballweg (R-Markesan), Chair of the Speaker's Task Force on Suicide Prevention, joined her colleagues in voting to advance eight policy recommendations put forward by the task force in September.

The Speaker's Task Force on Suicide Prevention was charged with evaluating current prevention efforts in the state and identifying opportunities to better support individuals who are struggling. They travelled across the state for six public hearings to focus on prevention efforts for at-risk communities such as veterans, first responders and law enforcement, youth and farmers. The bipartisan task force is comprised of 15 members including Vice-Chair Representative Steve Doyle (D-Onalaska).

"In 2017, 918 individuals died by suicide in Wisconsin. When a life is lost to suicide, it is more than a single death. It devastates a family and an entire community," said Rep. Ballweg. "I believe these proposals take a much needed step toward decreasing this trend. I am proud to have bipartisan support on our initiatives."

The eight bills passed through the Assembly include:

- Creating a Suicide Prevention Program in the Department of Health Services to assist with grant allocation and coordination of statewide prevention efforts.
- Grants for local mental health organizations or coalitions to provide suicide prevention programming.
- Grants to educate firearms retailers on suicide prevention and provide voluntary temporary firearm storage.
- Grants to support peer-to-peer suicide prevention programs in high schools such as Sources of Strength and Hope Squads.
- Grants to the Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools Center to provide programming relating to prevention and intervention for alcohol, tobacco and other drug abuse, mental health and school safety.
- Requiring student identification cards to have suicide prevention hotline numbers printed on them.
- Grants to assist farmers in completing courses at a technical college that relate to farm and business management techniques.
- Adding a one-time requirement of two hours of continuing education for certain health professionals who deal with at-risk communities.

"I'd like to express my gratitude to everyone who shared their deeply personal stories with the task force," stated Ballweg. "These recommendations are a reflection of the ideas and feedback given during our public hearings, and I look forward to the Senate passing these bills and the Governor signing them into law."

If you or someone you care about needs help, please contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text the Wisconsin HOPELINE to 741741.

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