



DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS

JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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JFC Republicans Neglect Agency Request that Could Save Lives *JFC agenda ignores critical funding for farmers and farm families in the Dairy State*

MADISON, WI - Today, the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) met to approve agency requests, known as 13.10 requests, for funding allocations to programs in the state. Noticeably absent from the agenda were several requests made by the Evers Administration including, \$100,000 a year for mental health assistance for farmers and farm families by the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection's (DATCP) Farm Center. This funding would allow the Farm Center to operate a hotline staffed by individuals trained in identifying signs of high stress and suicidal intentions, host workshops for farmers and their families, and provide farmers and their families with vouchers to cover counseling sessions. The funding has already been allocated for this program, but is inaccessible to the program without the Joint Finance Committee's approval.

In response to the Republican Joint Finance Committee leadership's neglect of these critical issues, the Democratic members issued the following statements:

"Small family farms have been struggling in Wisconsin, and they need help now," said Senator Jon Erpenbach (D- West Point). "The Joint Finance Committee specifically put money aside to provide access to mental health care to farmers, and the GOP is now turning a blind eye to this growing issue. Pushing this into a task force, instead of supplementing the program today, only postpones our attempts to provide assistance to farmers, and hinders DATCP's ability to save lives."

"My Republican colleagues gave themselves a slush fund of over \$100.9 million, which Governor Evers' reduced to \$70.9 million through his veto powers, in order to knot the purse strings of vital programs in our state and to dictate to state agencies how their funding will be utilized," said Representative Chris Taylor (D- Madison). "Now, a critical program, which is aimed at helping our small dairy farmers, needs that funding sitting in the Republicans' slush fund. Yet Republicans have failed to act on the motion to release those funds. This is all about power and control, and it is at the direct expense of Wisconsin farmers and their families."

"Today is another day of missed opportunities by legislative Republicans. The committee did not take up important agency requests including farmer mental health," said Representative Evan Goyke (D- Milwaukee). "Without action by the Joint Finance Committee, DATCP only has enough funding to provide counseling to 5 farmers. The need for this funding is great, and the need is now. Wisconsinites continue to see the priorities of the majority party, as they give more urgency to a political fight with Governor Evers than solving the problems our constituents face."

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