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Mental Health Month - Column by Rep. Calvin Callahan (R – Tomahawk)

Republicans have made targeted investments to support populations in Wisconsin that have seen sharp increases in mental health conditions, including our youth and farmers. May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and this is a great time to raise awareness of mental illness and provide assistance to those who are struggling with a mental health condition.

Whether it's been the increasing financial challenges they're facing in their industry, access to healthcare, or simply trying to improve their work-life balance, farmers have reported rising stress in their careers. In response, Republicans in the Wisconsin Legislature funded the Farmer Wellness Program, an important mental health counseling program, which encourages peer-support and provides additional business resources to farmers. Our farmers are key to communities throughout Wisconsin, especially in areas like the 35th Assembly District, and these resources will help them thrive.

Mental health conditions among K-12 students are on the rise as well, and the isolation policies that resulted during the COVID-19 pandemic only further increased students' anxiety and depression. Mental health services for our students are necessary; we recognized that social work services needed to be provided directly to students at school. So, Republicans doubled the funding for mental health categorical aids at K-12 schools.

Additionally, \$7 million was also invested for mental health collaboration grants. This helped schools partner with organizations out in the community to provide mental health services to the students. In past years, grants in the program have assisted hundreds of Wisconsin schools provide these critical services for their students.

The state budget crafted by Republicans also added nearly \$24 million in mental health spending over the biennium through increased reimbursement rates to healthcare providers. Mental health issues is affecting more folks than just our youth and farmers. All Wisconsinites who suffer from mental illness deserve access to quality mental healthcare, and we have taken a huge step in the right direction.

As your state representative, I am committed to ensuring those who struggle with mental illness receive the support they need. This month, we raise awareness for mental health and rededicate our support for those with mental health conditions. Every Wisconsinite deserves to enjoy their life to their fullest potential.