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WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR • 14TH DISTRICT

Taking Action to Lower Costs for Working Class Wisconsinites

By Senator Sarah Keyeski

The cost of basic necessities continues to rise. Lowering costs for working Wisconsinites struggling to make ends meet is a top priority of mine. So far this session, I have introduced multiple bills to address rising costs. While our state sits on a surplus of \$4 billion, I believe it's high time we invest that money to improve the quality of life for Wisconsinites.

Our families are struggling with the rising cost of groceries, and far too many people are experiencing food insecurity. Senate Bill 67, "Healthy School Meals for All," would ensure all children receive two free, healthy school meals a day. I believe no child should be hungry and left worrying about their next meal, and I believe this is a great way to put more money back in parents' pockets. In fact, according to USDA's Paid Lunch Equity Tool, if this proposal were implemented, a Wisconsin family could save approximately \$1848 annually!

Eight states have already enacted this policy and they are reaping the benefits. According to the Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota's school meal program has saved families hundreds of millions of dollars. These dollars saved allow families to put their money towards other essential needs and help local economies to grow. An investment in our students is an investment in today, and in the future. As such, this proposal is a huge win in multiple ways.

It's also imperative that we do what's right by our farmers who are facing challenges posed by rising costs and global uncertainty. Agriculture is integral to our heritage and the wellness of our communities. We must ensure our farmers can continue their work without unnecessary obstacles. That's why I introduced Senate Bill 148, "Right to Repair," which would give farmers the freedom to repair their own equipment or go to a local mechanic rather than forcing them to go to a costly dealership mechanic. The bill accomplishes this by requiring that manufacturers make things like repair documentation, data, parts, and necessary tools available to owners and independent servicers at fair costs.

"Right to Repair" is a commonsense consumer protection proposal. This is about making things fair, supporting our farmers, and creating job opportunities in our communities. Colorado has already passed similar legislation, and other states have legislation on this issue pending. Wisconsin's farmers deserve this freedom.

So many people across the state are dealing with the high cost of housing, and it's something lawmakers must work diligently to address. Senate Bill 208 is a bipartisan bill I've proposed that would prohibit hedge funds from buying single-family homes in Wisconsin.

This practice has worsened housing affordability, pushing families out of the home buying market. Additionally, when hedge funds buy these homes, they often turn them into rentals. This both takes a chance at homeownership away from families and increases rental costs in impacted communities. I hope to promote stability and growth in our communities by ensuring people who dream of buying a home have a shot at achieving that and building personal wealth. With Senate Bill 208, we can expand homeownership opportunities, lower costs, and do what's best for the working class.



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Finally, I think most would agree that the cost of healthcare and prescription drugs has gotten out of control. No one should ever find themselves in a position where they are forced to choose between their critical medication and other basic necessities. Unfortunately, many people must make this daunting choice. I recently introduced a bill in honor of Cole Schmidtknecht, who tragically passed away at the age of 22 due to an asthma attack after being unable to afford the sudden rise in price of his inhaler. Cole's story is both heartbreaking and preventable. LRB-2478/1 would ensure that medication and medical supplies used to treat asthma are affordable and accessible for patients.

Specifically, this bill would require health insurance policies that cover prescription drugs to cover the medication and supplies needed by individuals with asthma. It would also cap the out-of-pocket expenses patients would have to pay for prescription drugs to treat asthma at \$25 per one month supply and at \$50 per one month supply of medical supplies used to administer these drugs, such as asthma inhalers. This is just one step we can take to reduce the prices of medication people need to survive.

I am proud to be putting forward legislation that, by lowering costs, could truly make a difference in the lives of Wisconsinites – from families with kids just trying to make ends meet, to farmers who work our fields, to hopeful homeowners, to individuals who need access to affordable medication. I sincerely hope these bills advance through the legislative process this session as I am committed to addressing fundamental needs of my constituents.