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# HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17<sup>TH</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

## Capitol Update By Senator Howard Marklein September 8, 2022

### A Proven Plan for \$31 Million to Attack the Opioid Epidemic

The legislature's Joint Committee on Finance (JFC) approved a plan for settlement funds related to opioid litigation against pharmaceutical distributors and a pharmaceutical company on Thursday, September 8, 2022. The State Legislature, which represents the people of Wisconsin, has an oversight role for how large settlements are spent.

Wisconsin is receiving a total of \$400 million over the next 18 years from the settlement with pharmaceutical distributors (Cardinal, McKesson and AmerisourceBergen) and Johnson & Johnson related to the epidemic of opioid abuse in our state. In 2022 alone, the state expects to receive \$31 million. Counties and the city of Milwaukee receive settlement funding directly.

The plan approved by the JFC invests in proven programming, organizations and initiatives that have made a difference. We are using most of the settlement to grow programs that are reaching the people and communities that need our help the most.

Several stakeholders, who are ready to apply these settlement funds directly to the battle against opioid abuse in our communities, joined us to announce our plan and to discuss the impact these funds will have in their work to fight the drug epidemic. We were honored to be joined by Grant County Sheriff Nate Dreckman, President of the Badger State Sheriff's Association; Sarah Neerdaels and Dr. Michael Goldstone from Comprehensive Treatment Centers Central Group, which provides medication assisted treatment – or MAT – services for those battling addiction; and Karen DeSanto, former President of the Boys and Girls Club of Wisconsin and CEO of the Boys and Girls Club of West-Central Wisconsin to talk about an innovative program to reach our kids.

We made the following investments:

- \$3 million to expand the Narcan Direct program and prioritize distributions to law enforcement and first responders (EMS).
- \$2 million to create a distribution program for fentanyl test strips similar to the Narcan Direct program and prioritize law enforcement and first responders (EMS).
- \$10 million for capital projects with priority for a project that provides treatment for pregnant and post-partum women who are facing opioid addiction. These funds must be allocated throughout Wisconsin.
- \$6 million for tribal nations to identify strategies across the continuum of prevention, harm reductions, treatment and recovery.
- \$500,000 to improve the current overdose alert system and allow the Department of Health Services (DHS) to use some of the funds for the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) if necessary.

- \$250,000 for schools to invest in current Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA) programs.
- \$2 million for Medication Assisted Treatments.
- \$2.5 million to help pay for room and board costs for Residential Substance Use Disorder (RSUD) treatment.
- \$3 million for Law Enforcement Grants for medication assisted treatment education and awareness training, community drug disposal programs, treatment for jail inmates and pre-arrest or pre-arraignment diversion strategies. \$1 million of these funds must be reserved for rural communities.
- \$750,000 for a Statewide Community-Based Organization such as the Boys and Girls Club of Wisconsin to implement and expand opioid prevention programs in partnership with law enforcement in an after-school setting.
- \$1 million for the “Hub and Spoke” pilot program to create additional “hub” agencies that provide specialized substance use disorder treatment for Medical Assistance (MA) patients.

It is important to note that DHS unilaterally wrote a plan to spend these funds without consulting the legislature or several important stakeholders. We wanted them to work with law enforcement, our county governments and existing organizations that are already working on opioid issues throughout the state so that we could get the most impact for our investment.

They did not do this. They did not work *WITH* us. They did not include law enforcement at all. And they certainly did not accept our invitation to collaborate with the legislature on a solution to combat this terrible epidemic in every corner of Wisconsin.

The legislature objected to the DHS plan to enable us to weave in the input from stakeholder groups and to create a collaborative response that ensures investment throughout the state without duplication.

We maintained 85% of the DHS plan with some tweaks to specifically target our investments. We also designed new investments in proven programming, organizations and initiatives that have made a difference. Increasing investments in these areas will expand our ability to address opioid issues throughout Wisconsin and are a meaningful investment of the settlement funds.

Opioid abuse has tragically impacted families throughout our state. Our investments in this battle must be deliberate and collaborative. I am confident that all of our investments will attack this epidemic to save lives.

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