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STATE SENATOR • SENATE DISTRICT 27

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WHY MEDICAID EXPANSION MATTERS

Is it a new day? If so, seize the opportunity!

We are fortunate to begin the legislative session with a significant budget surplus on the heels of the first two budgets Governor Evers signed. Now, as we commence the budget process, it's worth noting just how much BETTER our circumstances would be—and could be—if the Republicans had taken our recently re-elected governor up on one of his most significant proposals: accepting Medicaid expansion.

Working on your behalf, and building on the efforts of legislative Democrats, Governor Evers twice proposed returning your tax dollars home from Washington D.C. by accepting federal Medicaid expansion. Unfortunately, even as state after state acted on their taxpayers' behalf and embraced the opportunity, Republican state legislators aligned with radical opposition, rejected common sense, and refused the funds. Wisconsin lost.

New memos from the Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB) expose the damage done and reveal potential opportunities to consider. To date, taxpayers have lost out on \$2.1 billion Wisconsin would have received from Washington D.C. since 2014, had Republican politicians allowed us to accept the funds. But they rejected the funds and the resulting medical services our communities needed—and still need today.

Not all funding opportunities are lost, and fiscal relief opportunities continue to be available and in reach. A separate LFB memo shows Wisconsin potentially could reap over a billion and a half dollars in benefits in the years ahead (\$500 million in savings, and over \$1 billion in federal incentives enacted by COVID response legislation).

We often hear the shortsighted argument from Republican legislators opposing expansion that these are all tax dollars, and therefore somehow not a savings. But this is an opportunity for Wisconsin taxpayers to see their tax dollars being used in Wisconsin, as in neighboring states—all our neighboring states—that have accepted Medicaid expansion.

I hope we can take as true my Republican friends' promises of a new leaf to be turned over this new legislative session. It's time to stop aligning with the radical fringe and start taking the side



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of Wisconsin taxpayers who could - and should - be allowed to see the same benefit as taxpayers in 40 other states, including every Midwest state and nearly every Northern one.

We have the opportunity to reverse a decade of stagnation in shared revenue from the state to local governments that has led to a funding crisis. It is a fact Wisconsin communities currently face serious financial challenges - and local public safety professionals are pleading for greater funding support - but the significant surplus remains unused in the state treasury. Held captive in the past by radicals' unwillingness to meet state needs, we now have the chance to add significantly to the surplus and bring our dollars home to solve ongoing shortages.

These relief opportunities are available if Republican legislators will join with their Democratic colleagues to accept the funds. Nearly 90,000 of our friends and neighbors will benefit from improved medical care and millions of taxpayers stand to have a better, safer life.

We hear Republican leaders claim it is a new day for Wisconsin, and I hope this is true. I hope this is a new day, and that we, as a legislative body, will seize the opportunities available to improve the lives of our citizens. We have the power to address and solve many of the issues Wisconsin faces, and we need to do it now.

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