



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

**Testimony before the Assembly Committee on State Affairs
Assembly Bill 240
Rep. Amy Loudbeck and Sen. Mary Felzkowski**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the opportunity to testify in favor of Assembly Bill 240, which will direct dollars from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) to help with the rebuilding of our critical emergency response and public safety infrastructure.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated several issues facing our emergency responders, including higher uses of the technology they use to respond to public safety issues and emergencies. These systems are out-of-date, and have been in the process of major updates for the last several budgets.

The costs to build these communication systems include a significant amount of one-time funding for the actual building of the systems, after the build out there will also be recurring on-going maintenance costs. The one-time costs include critical infrastructure for Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG-911) services statewide as well as funding for the Wisconsin Interoperable System for Communications (WISCOM). Both systems are run by the Office of Emergency Communications at the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) and require independent investment and operations.

Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG-911) allows for better communication with the individual calling 9-1-1 including accurate location detection, texting, video messaging, telematics capabilities, and enhanced communication for deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

WISCOM is the hand-held radio communication system for all first responders that allows them to communicate across jurisdictions and departments. It is used by 1,132 local, state, federal and non-governmental agencies across the state, with over 42,000 subscriber radios.

This bill funds three major pieces of the NG-911 and WISCOM projects:

- ESInet- the backbone of the system which is run by the state, is the infrastructure that allows NG-911 to work. ESInet funding amounts are based on estimates provided to LFB from DMA in 2021 Informational Paper #95 (IP-95) - an estimated \$14m annually for ongoing costs. The contracts are currently being negotiated and are expected to be signed in May of 2021 with local agencies able to transition to the network in 2022. Governor Evers proposed \$11.5m over the biennium in his budget.



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- GIS- mapping and pin pointing locations for higher accuracy and better response times. GIS funding in the first year is \$330k plus the annual cost of \$1.4m for a total of \$1.73m in the first year, then \$1.4m ongoing (IP-95). Governor Evers proposed the same amounts in his budget.
- WISCOM funding: IP-95 estimates that the project would cost \$27m for the design/implementation, \$5m for tower upgrades and \$2m for project management.
- It is important to note there are two components of the ongoing costs for WISCOM. First, while the new system is being built there would be an ongoing cost of \$1.4m annually to keep the current system in place until the transition is complete. The second component is ongoing maintenance for the new system, but those numbers haven't been shared at this time. 2017 Act 59 required an upgrade/replacement of the WISCOM system. In May 2020 DMA issued an RFI to develop requirements for the replacement WISCOM. DMA intends to issue an RFP for design in 2021, with the first phase going live in 2022.

We want to make sure you are aware that while this additional federal funding would be incredibly helpful in expediting the timeline for these projects, and would help fund the state's portion of the one-time costs, there will be on-going maintenance costs with both NG-911 and WISCOM. (Approximately \$16.8 million annually for both systems) There will also be significant additional costs to local units of government for upgrading their equipment that are not addressed in this bill.

Thank you for your time today, we'd be happy to answer any questions at this time.



April 5, 2021

To: Chairman Swearingen

Re: Assembly Bill 240

Thank you, Chairman Swearingen for considering Assembly Bill 240, which addresses the need for additional behavioral health beds in Western Wisconsin. I am the Executive Director of Behavioral for HSHS Sacred Heart & St Joseph's Hospitals, located in Eau Claire & Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. Our interest in working with the state to address the need for more inpatient behavioral health beds continues to be strong. HSHS shares the goal of ensuring people have access to inpatient behavioral health beds when they need them. Addressing this shortage directly aligns with our organizational mission, vision, and values.

Specifically, we know there is a need to expand bed capacity to reduce patient holds in the emergency room, keep patients close to home and reduce the heavy state resource burden associated with the high number of Chapter 51 admissions originating from counties in Western Wisconsin admitted to Winnebago Mental Health Institute.

Over the past many months there has been conversations, across the state, about meeting the needs of patients requiring Chapter 51 detention to ensure their own safety and the safety of others. HSHS is committed to serving this specific population in our adult and adolescent behavioral health units.

Not only are we committed to providing services to the population of people with behavioral needs, we are committed to continuing to focus on delivering services with high quality. Patients treated in our behavioral health program, receive the most current treatment, with Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, an evidenced based practice, being our foundation. We continuously review our services to ensure we are delivering the most current treatment approaches that result in the best possible outcomes. Readmission rates are an example of a quality outcome. Across the state, the average 30-day readmission rate for inpatient behavioral health units runs at approximately 10%. Our 30-day readmission rate is currently 1.7%. This is an indication of the quality of the services provided to people while they are in our services, and the discharge planning that occurs to prepare people to be successful once they leave our program.

HSHS remains a committed partner in improving behavioral healthcare in the state of Wisconsin and would enjoy this collaboration, with the state, to help address the needs of our communities.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Toni Simonson".

Toni Simonson, PhD
Executive Director – Behavioral Health
HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital
HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital

CHIPPEWA FALLS
POLICE
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March 26, 2021

To Chairman Swearingen and committee members on State Affairs:

Thank you for hearing AB-240. I am writing in support of this proposed bill addressing the critical shortage of hospital beds for our community members in crisis and in need of emergency detention.

I have spoken to many members of my community about this issue. As you are well aware, those in crisis are not criminals. However, due to the scarcity of hospital beds and the growing issue of mental health, we are transporting patients for long distances in the back of a squad car. This is not a desirable situation for someone in need of mental health services, a condition already stigmatized by society.


This issue also affects our police officers. Most departments in Wisconsin are already struggling to keep their ranks filled. This has resulted in many hours of overtime just keeping the streets covered. Transporting an emergency detention patient across the state is a heavy added burden. An emergency detention requiring a transport to Winnebago can take well over 8 hours in total between handling the call, hospital clearance and transport time there and back.

The Chippewa Valley is already home to hospitals with experience in serving those requiring emergency detention. This initiative would significantly expand those resources in northwest Wisconsin and the benefits would be felt immediately. The added juvenile beds to this area would be especially welcome as this would allow their caregivers to be closer. Every patient served in Eau Claire is one more bed available in Winnebago or at other mental health hospitals.

I have served the Chippewa Falls community for over 20 years. The emergency detention situation is one that needs immediate attention.

Thank you for all that you do to improve our quality of life here in Wisconsin. Please contact me if I can be of any further help.

Sincerely,



Matthew Kelm
Police Chief
Chippewa Falls Police Department

210 Island Street, Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin 54729-2351

Ph: 715-723-4424 • Fax: 715-723-1456 • www.chippewafalls-wi.gov • Email: policedept@chippewafalls-wi.gov



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

JESSE JAMES

Testimony before Assembly Committee on State Affairs
Assembly Bill 240
Tuesday, April 6, 2021

Thank you Chairman Swearingen and committee members for hearing Assembly Bill 240 today. Assembly Bill 240 directs the Governor to use federal stimulus funds to update Next Generation 911, WISCOM, and grant money to Sacred Heart and St. Joseph's Hospital to expand psychiatric bed capacity.

Emergency detention is a current law procedure for temporary involuntary commitment of individuals who are believed to be mentally ill, drug dependent, or developmentally disabled and who demonstrate a substantial probability of causing harm to themselves or others or an inability to satisfy certain basic needs due to a mental illness.

As someone with over 20 years of experience in law enforcement, I know firsthand how traumatic emergency detention is for everyone involved. When someone is going through a mental health crisis, and are deemed a danger, they can be taken into custody by a law enforcement officer, and transported to a hospital for treatment. The process of transporting individuals from the area they live to a hospital that has capacity to treat them for their needs is a lengthy process. It harms an individual more than it helps them. Right now in western Wisconsin, most law enforcement officers have to transport individuals to Winnebago Mental Health Institute because there is a lack of access to services in our part of the state.

Sacred Heart Hospital and St. Joseph's are existing facilities that are willing to upgrade their facilities to be able to treat more individuals with mental health needs. Expanding psychiatric bed capacity in western Wisconsin will help those who are going through a crisis by keeping them closer to home where their support system is. It will also help them get the care they need at a much quicker rate, rather than forcing individuals to ride in the back of a squad car, handcuffed, for multiple hours when they are going through a mental health crisis.

Increasing psychiatric bed capacity in western Wisconsin will save local dollars for counties and local governments. In 2018, 29 counties in northern and western Wisconsin accounted for 774, or roughly 20 percent of the individual admissions received at Winnebago Mental Health Institute. By being able to serve these individuals closer to home it will not only help their well-being, but also take a strain off on Winnebago Mental Health Institute.

This is a common sense solution that will help those who have mental health needs get care closer to home and in a much quicker fashion.

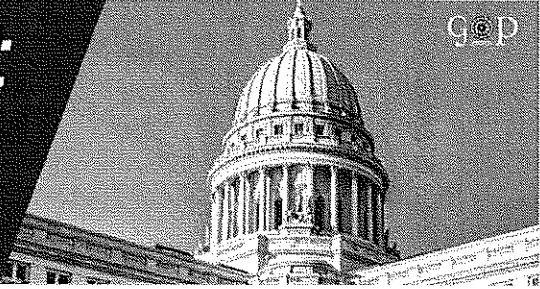


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April 6, 2021

Assembly Committee on State Affairs

Testimony on Assembly Bills 232, 240, 241 and 243

Thank you Chair Swearingen and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify in favor of Assembly Bills (AB) 232, 240, 241 and 243. These bills are part of our Responsible Stimulus Plan and I appreciate the opportunity to support our efforts on behalf of the people of Wisconsin.

The Responsible Stimulus Plan reflects the legislature's priorities to invest in people, improve infrastructure and boost our economy as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a thoughtful, thorough plan to work with the Governor to dedicate massive Federal investments from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) into the things that matter most to the people we serve.

Both houses of the legislature have spent considerable time and effort to develop a real plan after listening and understanding the needs of our people, communities and industries. This plan provides relief and investment to all communities, of all sizes, statewide. Our plan puts money back into the hands of the people.

AB 232 provides relief to families statewide by returning 10% of their 2020 property taxes to them. This legislation will directly and immediately help our citizens who are working hard to recover and rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic.

AB 240 will fulfill the one-time funding for the actual building of the statewide interoperable communications system and the updates needed on existing systems. This public safety system is critical for our state and the unexpected federal aid Wisconsin is receiving through ARPA is the perfect opportunity to upgrade our critical emergency response and public safety infrastructure. The bill directs \$53.2M to upgrade WISCOM and ESInet infrastructure as well as GIS mapping to improve the accuracy of the systems and improve response times. The bill also directs a grant to northwest Wisconsin to expand mental health bed capacity and improve local law enforcement responses to mental health crises, which is a critical need in northern Wisconsin.

AB 241 directs the Governor to dedicate \$500 million of ARPA funding to repay debt or pay for necessary capital building projects. Many Americans have paid off debt with the stimulus funds from our Federal government. Wisconsin should follow their example.

AB 243 makes many strong investments in our water infrastructure and environmental protections. This bill solves the lead lateral problem once-and-for-all by committing \$40 million to replacing lead service lines on private properties. It also allocates \$18.5 million for nonpoint source programs, \$2 million for well compensation grants and another \$500,000 for well testing and public education. These are all strong priorities for Wisconsin's water and natural resources.

Again, please accept this testimony in support of legislation that will support the people of our state who are working to recover and move forward after the last unprecedented year in our history. I believe these bills will make a real difference.

I apologize that I was not able to attend in person due to a meeting of the Joint Committee on Finance (JFC). However, I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of these bills.