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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 42nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony – **2021 Senate Bill 49** – Relating to opioid and methamphetamine data system

Senate Committee on Health

February 9, 2021

2020 was a tragic year in Wisconsin in many ways. In addition to the widely reported and tragic deaths we have seen from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, our state also reached another grim milestone in regard to opioid related deaths. In 2020, Wisconsin saw a record 3682 opioid overdose deaths, an increase of 38% from 2019.¹ Although it may not be at the forefront of the news, the specter of drug overdoses hangs over every community in the state. Opioid use doesn't discriminate when it comes to income, geographic region, or political leanings. Both Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties both saw record overdose deaths last year, and La Crosse County nearly doubled in total cases from 2019.^{2 3}

One of the best ways to understand this epidemic in our communities is to look at the data. Unfortunately right now, this data is housed in various locations and with various agencies, making it very hard for us to see the complete picture. This fact makes it harder for law enforcement and health agencies to combat the addiction crisis and makes it more difficult for us as law makers to pass meaningful and effective legislation.

Senate Bill 49 directs the Department of Administration to work with an outside company to develop a centralized database for opioid and methamphetamine related statistics and to work with other agencies, such as DOJ and DHS, to collect this information. DOA will also be responsible for compiling annual reports and distributing the collected data when requested.

Other states have implemented similar systems and it has been a valuable tool in their fight against drug addiction. Law Enforcement agencies have been able to use the compiled information to better target their enforcement strategies. Additionally, this database will be valuable to us as lawmakers in ensuring that laws we pass are effective.

If you have any questions about the intent of this legislation, please let me know. Otherwise, we have industry experts here who can answer more technical questions about this system.

¹ "Madison-area suicides, opioid overdoses, up early in 2020, dip later in year," Wisconsin State Journal, 1/10/2021

² "The perfect storm": Drug overdose deaths hit record-breaking numbers in the Milwaukee area during the coronavirus pandemic", Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 12/29/2020

³ "La Crosse County drug overdose deaths nearly double, medical examiner says", WKBT, 2/1/2020



Wisconsin Troopers' Association

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TO: Chairman Testin and Members
Senate Committee on Health

FR: Dan Restrepo
Wisconsin Troopers' Association

DA: February 9, 2021

RE: Support of Senate Bill 49, relating to opioid and methamphetamine data systems

Hello, Chairman Testin and members of the Senate Committee on Health. Thank you for holding a public hearing and for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of Senate Bill 49. My name is Dan Restrepo and I am a member of the Wisconsin Troopers Association (WTA). I have been an officer with the State Patrol for more than 6 years and work primarily in Green Lake County.

The Wisconsin Troopers' Association (WTA) is comprised of more than 500 troopers, inspectors and police communication operators (PCOs) that have a shared commitment and vision to make Wisconsin safer for its citizens and tourists.

We all know the opioid and illicit drug epidemic is severely impacting Wisconsin citizens from all walks of life. Troopers and other law enforcement across Wisconsin are no longer encountering impaired drivers, also known as "drugged drivers," exclusively during the normal late-night hours. We are experiencing impaired drivers and drug overdoses on a daily basis at all times in all areas of Wisconsin.

Personally, my experiences with opioid or meth cases include:

- Impaired driver barreling through a construction zone, zig-zagging across traffic prior to my ability to make a stop
- Helped perform CPR and administer Narcan to an individual who didn't survive
- Responded to emergency overdose where family member had administered Narcan, but I had to continue CPR and individual survived
- Individual using meth slid off the highway into a ditch; tow truck driver contacted law enforcement suspecting impairment and I confirmed it was meth along with other illicit drugs; both driver and passenger were severely impaired

My colleagues and I are encountering the use of opioids, meth and other illicit drugs in every corner of the state. I work in a very rural area and most of my interactions have been traffic-related incidents. However, one of my colleagues indicated that he is oftentimes a first responder to overdose incidents in gas station bathrooms, parking lots and other businesses that are located near highways. Users are obtaining their drugs and immediately using them, resulting in some local gas stations putting up signs saying their bathroom is out of order in order to prevent overdoses in them.

The men and women of the State Patrol record every time we respond to a scene and utilize Narcan on an individual. Allowing other affected agencies to access this information will create better collaboration and therefore more success in combating this epidemic.

This legislation will create a central repository for data on critical aspects of the opioid and meth epidemic. Using data, we will be able to make decisions about where to place resources to combat this problem from a law enforcement perspective.

We support this bill and its plan to use a central data base that collects, formats, analyzes, and disseminates opioid and meth data. We would again like to thank the author Senator Testin for his efforts to move this important legislation forward. I hope the committee will support this legislation.