

STATE SENATOR KATHY BERNIER
TWENTY-THIRD SENATE DISTRICT



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From: Senator Kathy Bernier
To: Committee on Health and Human Services
Re: Testimony on Senate Bill 86
Relating to: grant to a hospital for expanding psychiatric bed capacity.
Date: March 17, 2021

Thank you Chairman Testin and committee members for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 86 today. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with Rep. James on this important piece of legislation.

A mental health crisis is traumatic under any circumstances, but when the situation escalates to the point where a Chapter 51 emergency detention becomes necessary, the situation is often made worse by the need to transport individuals many hours away while restrained in the back of a squad car. The goal of this legislation is to reduce the time and stress of transporting emergency detention patients great distances from northern and western Wisconsin to Winnebago Mental Health Institute in Oshkosh by instead increasing the number of beds available regionally. Unfortunately, Winnebago has had several high-profile incidents lately, including most recently allowing an adolescent female to be released to a transport driver rather than her mother.

This bill won't solve Wisconsin's mental health crisis alone, but it will help those in crisis by keeping them closer to supporting family and friends, save county and local government resources and potentially serve as a model for similar efforts elsewhere in the state. Initial savings are estimated at \$2.7 million annually and could be much higher.

Senate Bill 86 directs a one-time \$15 million grant using bonding authority from the last budget for the startup costs of renovating existing facilities and training new staff to add 22 new mental health beds at an Eau Claire area hospital. Ongoing expenses would be absorbed by the hospital. The new and currently existing beds would be split between a 33 adult bed location and a dedicated 18 bed adolescent location nearby. That approaches the number of adolescent beds currently available at Winnebago MHI. This expansion would dramatically help with the difficulties of transporting individuals under Chapter 51 emergency detention to Winnebago MHI for 29 counties in northern and western Wisconsin. Traveling the 300 plus miles from northwest Wisconsin to Oshkosh can take over five hours each way.

Over the last three years these 29 counties have consistently accounted for 22 percent of the individual admissions received at Winnebago MHI. By serving the vast majority of individuals from these counties closer to home and reducing this number, the current strain on Winnebago could be reduced as well.

I ask you to please consider the passage of Senate Bill 86. Thank you again for allowing me to testify today.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

JESSE JAMES

Testimony before Senate Committee on Health
Senate Bill 86
Wednesday, March 17, 2021

Thank you Chairman Testin and committee members for hearing Senate Bill 86 today. Senate Bill 86 will grant 15 million to Sacred Heart and St. Joseph's Hospital to expand their 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. I want to thank Senator Bernier for her many years of working on this issue and bringing me on board.

Pierce County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Nancy Hove
Chief Deputy Steve Albarado



Sheriff Department Phone: 715-273-5051
Administration Fax: 715-273-3409
Investigation Fax: 715-273-3409
Jail/Administration: 715-273-1137

555 West Overlook Drive • Ellsworth, WI

To: Chairman Testin and other committee members
From: Pierce County Sheriff, Nancy Hove
Reference: Senate Bill 86
Date: March 16, 2021

As Pierce Counties Sheriff, I am pleased to see interest in possible action being taken to address the mental health needs of citizens from our region. At the present time, our citizens who are in mental health crisis are transported in the back of a squad car or ambulance for over a four hour drive, one-way, to the Winnebago Mental Health Facility. As the Sheriff, I have concerns over the individual in need of specialized mental health care. In my humble opinion, a mental health crisis is no different than a medical crisis. Can you imagine if you were having a heart attack and the closest hospital is over four hours away? For the safety and security of my officers, individuals being transported, who are already in crisis, are restrained. Imagine someone in a mental health crisis, being restrained and transported for over four hours. The actions we are forced to take are not reasonable to the ones in a mental health crisis.

As Pierced Counties Sheriff I am in full support of Senate Bill 86.

Regards,


Sheriff Nancy Hove



402 Technology Drive E
Menomonie, WI 54751

March 16, 2021

Senate Committee on Health Members:

Thank you for hearing Senate Bill 86. I am writing in support of this proposed bill to ensure larger capacity for inpatient psychiatric hospital beds to serve residents of North, Northwestern, and Western Wisconsin.

Northwest Connections (NWC) is the largest emergency mental health crisis services provider in the state of Wisconsin in which we serve 27 counties. Of those, the following counties named in the bill are directly served by NWC, and certainly are negatively impacted by the lack of available psychiatric inpatient hospital beds: Barron, Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, St. Croix, and Trempealeau.

While inpatient psychiatric care is not the only answer to serving those with mental health crisis needs, it certainly is a viable, pertinent resource to save lives. The suicide rate per capita in Wisconsin is already higher than the national average and statistically suicides occur more frequently in rural areas. NWC serves *rural communities* with already existing disparities in mental health care. Inpatient psychiatry is a vital part of the continuum of care for emergency mental health services that *all* Wisconsin residents should have equitable opportunity to easily access, not just those located near urban centers, such as Madison or Milwaukee.

In our region, we have a geographic incentive to avoid utilization of Winnebago Mental Health Institute (WMHI) which is already over-utilized, and at times, at risk of underserving its numerous residents. This has only grown over the past year in the face of pandemic. Private hospitals have done their best to keep public safety in the forefront while looking to meet the psychiatric needs of those in crisis. We have nationally is an increase in suicides due to larger gaps in services and an undue attention to prevention and intervention efforts for mental health. If we were able to develop larger psychiatric bed capacity in our region of Wisconsin, this is a tangible step to addressing those systemic issues.

In creating a northwestern facility for inpatient psychiatry, our consumers, your constituents, would experience the tremendous, positive outcomes. First, services would more localized offering not only familiarity and direct connection to mental health providers, but person-centered planning and enhanced family involvement. We know that having a support system is the primary protective factor in crisis intervention and prevention of suicides. Second, law enforcement would be able to protect and serve their communities with less time spent in transportation and medical clearance waiting times which pulls law enforcement from the street creating not only more opportunities for violent crime, but unnecessary costs to limited policing budgets. Our law enforcement partners needs more tools and access, not less. Thirdly, this bill would reduce the negative impact on already strained county budgets allowing for greater allocation into community-based programming and crisis diversion efforts. Being able to develop a system of proactive care versus reactionary response is paramount. Fourthly, this initiative is beneficial for ALL communities in Wisconsin because it would create more bed availability in the Southern and Eastern parts of the state allowing for greater access to inpatient psychiatric care for ALL residents. Lastly, the advantages are mostly impactful for the individual in crisis who would be treated more effectively, efficiently, and with greater compassion allowing for more streamlined access to stabilization and treatment; ultimately reducing financial obligations for themselves and other community partners; while having deeper involvement from their natural supports and person-centered interventions.

Most importantly, having greater capacity to serve these primarily more rural communities, who already have a significant disparity in mental health services, would create opportunities to engage and intervene earlier on, developing better connection to mental health resources to save lives, time, and money. I recently heard a colleague from Michigan in their progressive reform retort, "We need to look for opportunities to say 'YES' versus citing our reasons to say 'no.'"

We are all in this together, so please ask yourselves, "Are you just working to stop people from dying? Or are you truly helping people to LIVE?"

Respectfully,



Ashley Williams, MSW, LCSW
Emergency Services Director
Northwest Connections
AshleyWi@nwccg.com
715.939.0436

Cheyenne Ver Voort
420 Park Avenue
Little Chute, WI 54140

Chairman Testin and other Committee Members:

I am writing today as a resident of the state of Wisconsin to implore you to support Senate Bill 86. Though I live on the easternmost part of our state, I currently work as a mental health telephone crisis worker for Northwest Connections, a mental health crisis service that contracts with 27 Wisconsin counties, primarily located in the southern, western, and northern regions of the state of Wisconsin. As an emergency mental health worker who coordinates care with a number of community partners in the Chippewa Valley area, I can attest to the importance of expanding the mental health beds available in the western part of our state.

As it stands, when a mental health bed cannot be located for an individual in crisis who needs hospitalization, we make referrals to Winnebago Mental Health Institute, one of the only state mental health facilities available in our state. Often, these referrals come from the westernmost region of our state and place a heavy strain on Winnebago Mental Health Institute and local Law Enforcement. Whenever someone is referred to Winnebago Mental Health Institute, they are transported from their local hospital by local Law Enforcement, meaning we place undue strain on our local Law Enforcement agencies to transport individuals requiring hospitalization across the state for an available bed. This often means Law Enforcement is short-staffed and greatly extends the amount of time Law Enforcement must dedicate to mental health crises, even when the crisis is over.

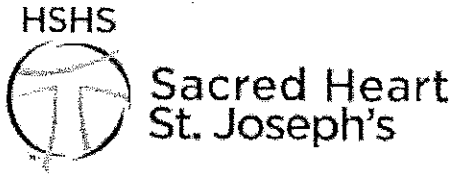
Expanding the mental health beds available in our state by supporting Senate Bill 86 will make necessary treatment for mental health crises more accessible and sustainable for our consumers and our community providers. By increasing bed availability, it is easier for crisis staff such as myself to make referrals, ensure a consumer in need is placed at an inpatient hospital when appropriate, and allows us to continue taking more crisis calls from consumers and community partners rather than be tied up making referrals to hospitals who do not have beds available.

This would also lessen the strain placed on Emergency Departments as they are currently responsible for the medical clearance necessary for placement to an inpatient hospital, and are often the first point of contact for crisis workers and Law Enforcement when there is an immediate safety risk requiring hospitalization. The longer a patient waits for a mental health bed to be found, the longer they are in the Emergency Department and using already limited resources regarding staffing and space in Emergency Departments across our state.

As you can see, increasing the availability of mental health beds in our state does not just directly benefit consumers who need those beds in times of mental health emergencies, but also reduces the strain placed on community partners working together during all aspects of a mental health crisis. We want to decrease deaths by suicide in the state of Wisconsin, and we want to decrease the strain felt by all of our community partners (crisis workers, providers, hospitals, Law Enforcement, etc.) in times of crisis. Please help our communities, help the people in our state who would benefit from these mental health beds, and help the members of our community diligently working to decrease deaths by suicide and the human toll of mental health crises by supporting Senate Bill 86.

Thank you,

Cheyenne Ver Voort, M.Ed.
Mental Health Telephone Crisis Worker
Northwest Connections



Senator Kathleen Bernier
Room 319 South, State Capitol
PO Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707
Sen.Bernier@legis.wisconsin.gov

Dear Senator Bernier,

Thank you for your continued support in improving behavioral health services in the state of Wisconsin, particularly those underserved communities in the western region of the state. HSHS Sacred Heart and St. Joseph's Hospitals are a leading provider in acute behavioral health services, providing much needed behavioral health care to some of the most vulnerable residents of Wisconsin.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, our commitment to serving the population of people with behavioral health needs has not waived. With the state's support of a \$15 million grant, it is our intention is to expand our adult and adolescent inpatient psychiatric units by a total of 22 beds (result: 51 beds, of which 33 will be for adults, and 18 for adolescents). These beds could be used for both Chapter 51 emergency detentions and voluntary inpatient psychiatric admissions.

Patients initially presenting as an emergency detention comprise about 52% of our total mental health admissions. Of those, about half are successfully de-escalated resulting in a voluntary admission instead of an emergency detention, offering a better outcome for both the patient and the state.

We are all aware of the toll the pandemic has taken on our communities this past year. For that reason, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of expanding these psychiatric units. HSHS remains a committed partner in improving healthcare in the state of Wisconsin and would enjoy this collaboration to help address the needs of our communities.

Very respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John L. Wagner".

John L. Wagner
President & CEO
HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital
2661 County Highway I
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729
Office (715) 717-7200



**RIVER FALLS
POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Office of the Chief of Police
2815 Prairie Drive
River Falls, WI 54022
715.425.0909

March 16, 2021

RE: SB-86/AB-92

Chairman Testin and other committee members:

Thank you for hearing AB-92/SB-86 testimony tomorrow. I'm writing in support of the proposals to reduce the time and stress of transporting emergency detention patients great distances from northern and western Wisconsin to Winnebago Mental Health Institute by instead increasing the number of beds available regionally.

Your committee has my full support of this initiative! Eau Claire is a desirable location for both western Wisconsin patients, as well as those in northern Wisconsin. Effectively helping those in crisis is a top priority for the River Falls Police Department.

Our current transportation procedures are unacceptable, but we are left with no other choice. Currently, in River Falls, patients going to Winnebago Hospital in need of critical mental health care are transported 250 miles, in handcuffs, on a hard-plastic rear seat of the patrol car. This will mean the patient is in this position for over 4 hours. This is why I believe this proposal will be a win for the patient, our community, and the State of Wisconsin.

This is ineffective in stabilizing the patients stress level and mental well-being and also takes the patient away from their family support system. It has been our experience that most patient's support network (relatives/friends/co-workers) are unable to be a part of their healing process due to the extreme distance from the treatment center. This is especially true for our community because patients we help often attend the University of Wisconsin – River Falls and 50% of the students come from Minnesota.

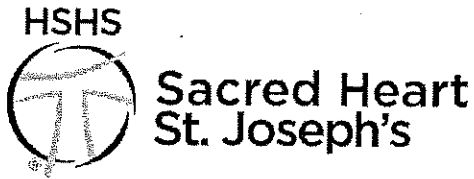
I am a relatively new police chief to Wisconsin and I quickly realized when I took over leadership in River Falls that our emergency detention process is broken in Wisconsin. This needs to change for the betterment of those we serve. We can do much better!

Thank you for all you do for our great State of Wisconsin. Please let me know if I could help in any way to see this gets the funding that is long overdue.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gordon Young". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "Y".

Gordon Young
Chief of Police
River Falls Police Department



March 16, 2021

Senator Kathleen Bernier
Room 319 South
State Capitol
PO Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707
Sen.Bernier@legis.wisconsin.gov

Dear Senator Bernier,

Thank you for your constant support of the need for additional behavioral health beds in western Wisconsin and our interest in working with the state to reduce this need. As you know from our conversations HSHS shares your passion in resolving this shortage as it 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. Recently we shared the very telling number of 8.5 behavioral health patients seen per day in our emergency room, they consist of patients seeking a voluntary admission and those that are an involuntary. Over the last few months there has been more conversation across the state about meeting the needs of patients requiring Chapter 51 detention for their own safety and the safety of others. HSHS is committed to serving this specific population in our adult and adolescent behavioral health units.

With all we have experienced this past year, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of expanding these psychiatric units. HSHS remains a committed partner in improving healthcare in the state of Wisconsin and would enjoy this collaboration to help address the needs of our communities.

Respectfully,

Sandra L. Anderson

Sandra L. Anderson
Interim President and CEO.
HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital
900 West Clairemont Avenue
Eau Claire, WI 54701

HSHS



Sacred Heart
St. Joseph's

March 15, 2021

Senator Kathy Bernier
23rd Senate District
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Bernier,

Thank you for your continued interest in improving mental health services in the state of Wisconsin, particularly those underserved communities in the western and northern regions of the state. HSHS Sacred Heart and St. Joseph's Hospitals are a leading provider in acute behavioral health services, providing much needed mental health care to residents of western Wisconsin and across the state.

Even as we faced a pandemic, our commitment to serving the population of people with behavioral health needs has not wavered. With the state's support of a \$15 million grant, it is our intention is to expand our adult and adolescent inpatient psychiatric units by a total of 22 beds (result: 51 beds, of which 33 will be for adults, and 18 for adolescents). HSHS would operate these beds to support all non-violent adult and adolescent acute behavioral health needs. This means that these beds could be used for both Chapter 51 emergency detentions and voluntary inpatient psychiatric admissions. It is our belief that expansion of this nature would positively impact the number of emergency detentions in the area through prevention as well as increased capacity.

Patients initially presenting as an emergency detention comprise about 52% of our total mental health admissions. Of those, about half are successfully de-escalated resulting in a voluntary admission instead of an emergency detention, offering a better outcome for both the patient and the state.

HSHS intends to continue admitting individuals with health care coverage under the Medical Assistance program or private insurance, including those who are underinsured, and uninsured, as this is our current practice and aligns directly with our hospitals' mission and values.

With all our country has experienced this past year, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of expanding these psychiatric units. HSHS remains a committed partner in improving healthcare in the state of Wisconsin and would enjoy this collaboration to help address the needs of our communities.

Very respectfully,

Andrew Bagnall
President & CEO, HSHS Wisconsin

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Diane Calile, Director



March 15, 2021

Senator Patrick Testin
President Pro Tempore
Senate Committee on Health Chairperson

Senator Dale Konyenga
Senate Committee on Health Vice-Chairperson
Room 310 South
State Capitol
PO Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707

RE: March 17, 2021 Public Hearing written testimony concerning community-based acute psychiatric hospital bed expansion.

Dear Honorable Senators and Senate Committee on Health Members:

This written correspondence is intended to support the need for additional community-based acute psychiatric hospital beds in the western region of Wisconsin.

Western Wisconsin Human Services Departments are in desperate need of additional community-based acute psychiatric beds. Because community-based hospital beds are limited at this time, counties far too frequently, must use Winnebago Institute for Mental Disease (IMD) as a hospital of last resort.

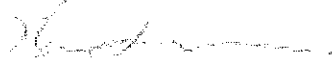
The western region has been very successful at diverting individuals from emergency detention. However, even as the number of diversions has risen, utilization at Winnebago has increased due to lacking community-based hospital bed options. I have included data from western region counties demonstrating the problem.

The western region is progressive and has regularly embraced new treatments, consortiums, and programs to enhance mental health care and reduce hospitalization. With recent hospital closures, Winnebago is only option left to provide safety and involuntary mental health care.

Emergency detention authorized in the western region that subjects a citizen to involuntary transport and admission to Winnebago IMD is traumatic, costly, disconnects the person from family and local treatment providers and is inhumane.

Please record my testimony and please consider ways to increase the availability of community-based acute psychiatric hospital beds in the Western region.

Sincerely,


Ron Schmidt, MSW
Deputy Director

Good Afternoon,

As the Human Services Director for Pepin County I feel it is important to acknowledge the work and support that has gone into the development and consideration of support for passage of SB-86 and its companion bill AB-92. Mental Health crisis situations impact each county, no matter the size. One concern that is specific to Western and Northern Wisconsin is the location of emergency detention facilities. As you may be aware, counties located in Western/Northern Wisconsin are limited in local hospital psychiatric hospital beds. This means, when the option for community support is not at a level to ensure safety of the person or community, local Law Enforcement Officers must leave their communities and travel across the state to Winnebago or Mendota Institutions. For Pepin County, this means that we no longer have an Officer available for other emergency needs as Pepin typically has one Officer on duty per shift. In addition, there is an extensive wait time for Law Enforcement Officers to complete the Medical Clearance mandate prior to beginning the trip across Wisconsin. The costs associated with this process is high for counties such as Pepin.

In addition to fiscal impacts we must consider the impact that the length of this process takes on the person that is not in a healthy state of mind. I would like to share a personal story with you. My mother in law, who suffers from bipolar disease, has been through the emergency detention process many times throughout her life. Each time that it occurs she becomes physically and emotionally vulnerable as she believes she is going to jail. The ride to the emergency detention facility is one where she continues to believe that she is "bad" and that she is being arrested for being bad, not understanding that the Law Enforcement escort is for her safety. If you can put yourself in her place or my husband's place in watching this occur with his mother. What would it be like to ride in the back of a Law Enforcement vehicle for four hours believing you are heading to jail because you are bad when truly it is due to a condition that impacts your brain, which is not your fault, but rather a condition that was inherited from her mother? When she is in this state of mind, she cannot comprehend that it is the disease, she only sees that she is at fault. Now, think about the other people in your life and community that may be impacted in the same way by a trip across the state, only to arrive at a facility that is over capacity, and that family members live too far away to visit or not have available transportation or funding to make the trip. We cannot undervalue the impact of natural support in the recovery process.

We have a real opportunity to make a difference in the lives of not only the persons that need the emergency detention but also for their loved ones, and community. We have an opportunity to use our Local Law Enforcement for community safety by shortening the length of their trip to emergency detention to under an hour for Pepin County and other counties in the region. We have an opportunity to reduce the costs to both local levy and state funds by providing the service within a reasonable distance.

I appreciate the opportunity to address this important issue with you and to send my appreciation for your anticipated support of SB-86 and AG-92.

Sincerely,

Paula R. Winter

Paula R. Winter
Director

Pepin County Human Services
740 7th Ave West
P.O. Box 39
Durand, WI 54736
pwinter@co.pepin.wi.us
715-672-8941 ext 158
Fax: 715-672-8593

I support passing of the latest version of the bill is SB-86 and its Assembly companion is AB-92.

The passing of these bills is important to mental health patients and the care they receive.

*Tracy Roper-Beachem
Administrative Secretary
Cornell Police Department
P: (715) 239-3707
F: (715) 239-3706*

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To Whom It May Concern:

I want to express my sincere gratitude for considering the passage of SB-86 and its companion bill AB-92. The lack of emergency mental health services within the Western Region has caused an extreme financial burden to County Departments and undue, and extended, trauma to our Wisconsin Families. When a child has a mental health crisis, Winnebago Mental Health Clinic is often the only option for treatment. A child handcuffed and transported 150 miles away from family and local supports only multiplies the trauma endured by the child, and, diminishes the natural family support children need in a time of crisis. The burden on these families to find daycare for other children, lodging, and gas to travel such a distance, reduces the ability of family to advocate or engage in their child's treatment. Without offering a closer treatment option for children, where families and local services can support, our children in crisis are going without vital supports and we are eluding the healing process needed for stabilizing our children and the family homes within our communities.

Please consider the amazing impact on children and families who would benefit from a close regional treatment option. I implore you to do what is in the best interest of your Wisconsin families with the passage of SB-86 and AB-92.

Sincerely,

*Pamella Kernan, Director
Department of Social Services
Clark County Court House
517 Court St., RM 502
Neillsville, WI 54456*

Pamella.kernan@co.clark.wi.us

Please note I am intermittently working remotely and available 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. by email, skype, Webex or phone at Phone:715-743-5233 or 715-743-4094

Hello,

The Take a Stand Against Meth campaign in Chippewa County is officially requesting and has requested more access to mental health, as well as fully supporting the current mental health initiatives to provide more mental health resources.

We are supporting this cause as it both directly and indirectly affects the same campaign goals we are currently fighting for!

For example, if an addict is ready to start recovery but does not have access to mental health resources, how then does recovery begin? One might suggest attending Narcotics Anonymous meetings, or by just saying no.

Sounds good, right? Wrong. One of the most important - if not the most important - tools in a meth user's recovery is cognitive behavioral therapy. Without access to this therapy, users have very little chance at retraining the thoughts that hold them captive to meth and ultimately kicking their addiction to this awful drug.

With that said, the adult son of a campaign volunteer is now a successful recovering addict. Thank goodness! But when he was in active addiction, and seeking recovery, access to mental health treatment did not exist. His solution to that problem was to threaten suicide and other violent self harm in order to be involuntarily committed at the local hospital. By being involuntarily committed, he then received the mental health treatment he so desperately needed.

I have a close family member whose personal life quickly and violently tanked when she became a domestic violence victim. This family member is also a successful recovering heroin addict, with 5 years sobriety. With the added stress, anxiety, and danger she quickly declined and she knew she needed help. She made an appointment with the first available physician (three weeks ago) but was told there was a three month wait for the first available mental health treatment appointment. Three months!! She was thoroughly frustrated and after a week or more of waiting, told me that the stress and anxiety were so bad she was considering using again just to take the edge off. Thankfully, her doctor was able to get her in again and prescribe medication to help her deal with what life was giving her. She is still waiting for the first available mental health appointment. The worst part is that the danger still exists for her, and therefore so does the risk of using again.

After all, what addict is going to voluntarily wait three months to start recovery? What recovering addict should throw away five years of successful and clean living because help is not available?

The answer to both is NONE.

- No addict is going to wait, and we are going to lose that chance! We are going to lose that son, daughter, mother, or father!
- No recovering addict should ever have to throw away the positive and successful changes because they don't have the right tools and resources to continue fighting for their sobriety!

It seems like a simple answer - just provide more access to mental health treatment. But as you know, this is a huge issue in our area today. The lack of access and resources affects so many of us in so many ways.

The campaign is fully aware of the current push for more mental health access and resources and we want you to know we 100% support these initiatives. Please let us know if and how we can help get these initiatives pushed further and ultimately approved.

The very people we are fighting for need this chance to survive their addiction. The kids who aren't able to return home need this chance for their parents addiction. The son of the volunteer, and his family, needs this chance to continue his fight against meth addiction. My family member needs this chance to continue her sobriety and her life.

We all need this.

Thank you,
Sarah Peck
Take a Stand Against Meth – Chippewa County
Communication Team Chair

P.S. We have one more bit to add to this email/request. Recently we posted on the Take a Stand Against Meth Facebook page, and the post generated way more views and clicks than any of our other posts to date. This post contained recovery meetings links and mental health contact information.

That's it. Nothing pretty, nothing terrifying. Just info. And it's been viewed 15,500 times and shared 66 times. It is now pinned to the top of our page. I should note that the taskforce page only has 1900 followers and yet, a post containing mental health information very quickly surpassed that.

Good Afternoon,

My name is Allison Fern and I am the Health and Human Services Director with Burnett County. We are located at 7410 County Road K in Siren, WI.

I am writing today regarding SB-86 and AB-92 as it is our understanding the legislation has been reintroduced by Senator Bernier and Representative James. I am writing to you today in support of SB-86 and the companion AB-92 bill to expand mental health bed space in Western Wisconsin. We echo what you have heard from others within the Western Region. Given our county seat is a 4+ hour drive to Winnebago, the strain on our local residents and resources is incredible. Our Behavioral Health unit staff and management coupled with our crisis line resources do an excellent job in diverting and utilizing community based resources when safely possible. However, when a mental health bed is needed, we are too often having to put both children and adults experiencing an acute mental health crisis in the back of a squad car to be transported for more than 4 hours away from their community and family.

We know children and adults are best served within their communities. Please vote in support of this legislation.

Thank you for your time,
Allison

Allison Fern, CSW

Director, Burnett County Department of Health and Human Services

P:(715)349-7600, ext. 2211

F: (715)349-2145

afern@burnettcounty.org

Please note my extension has changed

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This email is in support of SB-86 and its companion bill AB-92 expanding mental health bed space in Western Wisconsin. As a rural county, the Jackson County Sheriff's Dept., the Jackson County Department of Health and Human Services as well as our local Hospital all struggle with finding resources for our client's in crisis due to the severely limited number of inpatient beds in the Western Region. We are grateful that you are moving forward in sponsoring support for an emergency detention facility in the Western Region. Without local resources, as you know, transport for our clients creates long distance travel which can be up to 3 to 5 hours away. This is not only difficult for the client who is in police custody during this process but for the families who are involved with their loved ones as the distance between the client and the family becomes a barrier for support. It is also difficult for staff to assist with discharge planning and lining up further resources. This traumatizing process makes it more difficult for individuals who are experiencing struggles with mental health and for their families who are watching from the "sidelines". Due to the trauma involved with travel while in police custody, individuals and families are deterred from seeking resources and assistance after this experience. Again, we support and applaud your efforts to create more inpatient beds within the Western Region and hope to see this come to fruition. Thanks so much for your time and attention.

Christine Hovell R.N. B.S.N.

Director
Jackson County DHHS
421 County Road R
Black River Falls, WI 54615
Phone: 715-284-4301 ext 315

Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around. Leo Buscaglia

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Good Afternoon,

My name is Jeremy Jacobs and I am the Human Services Director for Rusk County. I offer the following narrative in support of SB-86 and AB-92.

Rusk County Health & Human Services and local partners support the reintroduction of this impactful legislation, as noted in SB-86 and its companion bill AB-92, as it pertains to increasing the mental health bed space in Western Wisconsin. We can all attest to the traumatic impact that hospitalization can have on one's life. The ability to swiftly and efficiently get a consumer to a safe environment can make all the difference in a life while showing compassion and concern for all involved. With additional regional options present, there is a greater likelihood of long-lasting connectivity promoting support and building trust that often is a forgotten component.

Too often we are seeing our law enforcement officers embarking on a 10-hour long round trip that stresses the local departments, budgets and moral. Together, incrementally, we can change the trajectory of how mental health is delivered in our communities. This starts with resources that are available.

Thank you for the efforts!!!

Jeremy

Good Afternoon,

My name is Tonya Eichelt and I am the director of the Polk County Community Services Division at 100 Polk County Plaza, Balsam Lake, WI 54810.

I am emailing to continue support of SB-86 and its companion bill AB-92 expanding mental health bed space in Western Wisconsin. Having previously testified in favor of similar legislation, Polk County continues to support an increased capacity for emergency detention holds in Western Wisconsin. As my previous testimony will reflect, the trauma inflicted upon someone who is currently in a mental health crisis is only exacerbated when being hauled across the state in handcuffs in a squad car. I cannot imagine being put into this situation for my own care or any of my loved ones. In addition to the traumatic experience at the beginning of the mental health crisis, my care team also needs to deal with discharge planning with me from across the state, which is not ideal or efficient.

Here in Polk County we recently dealt with a situation in which we had a COVID positive teen in need of transport to Winnebago for very significant behavioral issues. It was New Year's Eve 2020, during COVID and a blizzard. A local ambulance company attempted to transport but could not complete because the rig crashed in the blizzard conditions. Thankfully, everybody was ok but the COVID positive teen still needed transport across the state. The local law enforcement agency ended up sending a deputy to do the transport which then required a 14 day quarantine because of the exposure to COVID. It took nearly 1 entire day, multiple professionals, an ambulance crash and a deputy being placed on quarantine to develop this less than desirable plan to get the teen appropriate care.

I believe Dunn County shared information on the number of emergency detentions at Winnebago. To summarize, in 2013, 5% of all emergency detentions were placed at Winnebago. In 2020, that number rose to 27%, or 400 people from Western Wisconsin. Our crisis programs are effective in diverting about 70% of persons who touch the system away from emergency detention but we have to have an accessible and safe place for hospitalization that does not involve travel across the state.

Please vote in support of this legislation.

Thank You,
Tonya



Tonya Eichelt, CSW, MPA
Division Director
Polk County Community Services Division
Interim Health Officer
Dept of Children and Families- Public Health- Behavioral Health
100 Polk County Plaza, #50
Balsam Lake, WI 54810
Phone: 715-485-8493
Fax: 715-485-8490
Email: tonya.eichelt@co.polk.wi.us

Thank you Senator Bernier and Assembly Representative James for your efforts to address mental health crisis services in the Western Region of Wisconsin. St. Croix County supports SB-86 and its companion bill AB-92 to expand bed capacity for persons with emergent mental health needs. While we understand that long-term solutions to mental health and addiction crisis can and should be addressed through preventive health care measures and parity, we recognize the critical need for addressing our current lack of bed capacity in this region. Persons who require emergency mental health services must be treated with the dignity and care that is afforded to other types of serious health concerns with local options for accessing that care in a timely manner. Events of the past year have only exacerbated the acuity and complexity mental health conditions encountered by our crisis response service areas and we must be prepared for what may be an inevitable increase in our communities' needs. For these reasons, please vote in favor of this important legislation.

Bob Rohret

Bob Rohret | Administration - HHS Director

Health and Human Services

1752 Dorset Ln New Richmond WI 54017

T: 715-246-8223

Bob.Rohret@sccwi.gov



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Thank you Senator Bernier and Assembly Representative James for listening and taking this action to better serve those suffering from a mental health crisis in Western and Northern Wisconsin. We are the professionals trying to serve this critical population at their most dire time but we can only do so much with the limited resources locally. Washburn County is four plus hours away from Winnebago Mental Health Institute, the likely only option when the few local psychiatric hospital beds are full. Adding the additional stressor of being transported in the back of a police vehicle, handcuffed, for such a long period of time does not give the person confidence that the system is there to help. Obviously this also takes a toll on law enforcement personnel and budgets, as you are already aware of their valid grievances. DHS recognizes there is a shortage of psychiatric hospital beds in the region, the problem is real, and with your efforts we hope our vulnerable population will find some relief in the near future. Washburn County as a whole fully supports the passage of these bills to bring regional psychiatric hospital bed capacity to a level that better meets our people's needs.

Jim LeDuc

Director, Washburn County Health & Human Services Department
PO Box 250
Shell Lake, WI 54871

715-468-4767

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Good Afternoon:

My name is Kris Korpela and I am the director of the Dunn County Department of Human Services at 3001 US Hwy 12 East, Menomonie WI 54751.

This email is in support of SB-86 and its companion bill AB-92 expanding mental health bed space in Western Wisconsin. Having previously testified in favor of similar legislation in the past, I remain in staunch support of anything that we can do to increase capacity for emergency detention holds in Western Wisconsin. It is beyond comprehension to put myself in the seat of someone who is experiencing a mental health crisis and must sit through hours of medical clearance and then transportation to a distant part of the state, in a squad car, in handcuffs. Or to be the mom, sister, wife, daughter, etc of someone in that situation.

Attached is data collected from the 17 counties of the Western Region illustrating that while the number of emergency detentions initiated by crisis staff has remained stable or even declined in the past five years, the number of persons who must be held at Winnebago has dramatically increased. In 2013, 5% of all emergency detentions were placed at Winnebago. In 2020, that number rose to 27%, or 400 people from Western Wisconsin. Our crisis programs are effective in diverting about 70% of persons who touch the system away from emergency detention but we have to have an accessible and safe place for hospitalization that does not involve travel across the state.

Please vote in support of this legislation.

Kristin Korpela
Director
Dunn County Department of Human Services
Menomonie, WI 54751
715-231-2750

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Western Region Emergency Detention Statistics

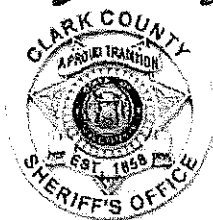
COUNTY	YEAR	Total Emergency Detentions (ED's) Per County Per	# of ED's to Winnebago per county per year	Net county costs for Winnebago placements *	Estimated average cost per round trip for ED transports **	Total transportation costs for ED transport from County Seat to Winnebago ***	Net County Costs for Mendota placements*
BARRON	2013	143	6	\$163,907	\$970	\$5,865	
	2014	167	15	\$62,703	\$970	\$14,664	
	2015	152	21	\$185,649	\$970	\$20,529	
	2016	126	23	\$199,826	\$970	\$22,484	
	2017	119	34	\$105,239	\$970	\$33,239	
	2018	101	16	\$199,643	\$970	\$27,372	
	2019	107	22	\$115,206	\$970	\$21,507	\$12,677
2020	100	35	\$283,211	\$970	\$34,215	\$1,053	
BURNETT	2013	41	2	\$5,619.00	\$1,149	\$2,298.16	
	2014	30	1	\$18,489.00	\$1,149	\$1,149.08	
	2015	31	2	\$39,325.00	\$1,149	\$2,298.16	
	2016	31	3	\$16,757.00	\$1,149	\$3,447.24	
	2017	35	5	\$25,396.00	\$1,149	\$5,745.40	
	2018	34	9	\$28,816.00	\$1,149	\$10,341.72	
	2019	32	7	\$19,431.00	\$1,149	\$8,043.56	\$0
2020	27	10	\$45,947.00	\$1,149	\$11,490.80	\$17,436	
BUFFALO	2013	14	1	\$5,186.00	\$682	\$681.54	
	2014	15	1	-\$4,673.00	\$682	\$681.54	
	2015	13	2	\$12,201.00	\$682	\$1,763.08	
	2016	27	6	\$33,053.00	\$682	\$5,269.24	
	2017	13	6	\$52,170.00	\$682	\$5,289.24	
	2018	29	10	\$47,030.00	\$682	\$8,815.40	
	2019	27	2	\$48,430.00	\$682	\$1,763.08	\$0
2020	17	3	\$76,695.00	\$682	\$3,644.62	\$0	
CHIPPEWA	2013	135	1	\$154,856.00	\$813	\$813.94	
	2014	154	7	\$193,935.00	\$813	\$5,690.58	
	2015	160	16	\$47,931.00	\$813	\$14,632.92	
	2016	163	11	\$83,861.00	\$813	\$8,942.34	
	2017	168	30	\$297,205.00	\$813	\$24,388.20	
	2018	136	23	\$100,194.00	\$813	\$17,071.74	
	2019	176	25	\$317,913.00	\$813	\$20,323.50	\$16,840
2020	112	34	\$151,705.00	\$813	\$27,639.96	\$0	
CLARK	2013	70	3	\$76,687.00	\$607	\$1,821.42	
	2014	107	7	\$178,639.00	\$607	\$4,249.98	
	2015	92	8	\$228,704.00	\$607	\$4,857.12	
	2016	91	10	\$241,058.00	\$607	\$6,071.40	
	2017	80	7	\$162,347.00	\$607	\$4,249.98	
	2018	39	4	\$0.00	\$607	\$2,428.56	
	2019	53	12	\$0.00	\$607	\$7,285.68	\$0
2020	40	11	\$0.00	\$607	\$6,678.54	\$0	
DOUGLAS	2013	43	1		\$1,303	\$1,303.43	
	2014	33	0	\$200,998.00	\$1,303	\$0.00	
	2015	28	3	\$545,025.00	\$1,303	\$3,910.29	
	2016	39	6	\$540,177.00	\$1,303	\$7,820.58	
	2017	37	11	\$773,781.00	\$1,303	\$14,337.73	
	2018	34	0	\$455,347.00	\$1,303	\$3,606.86	
	2019	45	5	\$545,144.00	\$1,303	\$6,517.15	\$318,133
2020	60	5	\$268,145.00	\$1,303	\$6,517.15	\$173,644	
DUNN	2013	114	2	\$60,219.00	\$899	\$1,797.39	
	2014	187	5	\$80,310.00	\$899	\$4,493.45	
	2015	90	9	\$75,103.00	\$899	\$8,088.21	
	2016	58	9	\$127,742.00	\$899	\$8,088.21	
	2017	103	13	\$160,146.00	\$899	\$11,662.97	
	2018	81	12	\$148,623.00	\$899	\$10,784.28	
	2019	100	14	\$144,632.00	\$899	\$12,581.66	\$3,760
2020	86	28	\$510,899.00	\$899	\$25,163.32	\$39,405	
EAU CLAIRE	2013	262	3	\$44,556.00	\$792	\$2,377.00	

	2014	292	22	\$165,054.00	\$792	\$17,431.92	
	2015	300	32	\$248,693.00	\$792	\$29,353.52	
	2016	344	34	\$419,407.00	\$792	\$42,787.44	
	2017	353	52	\$639,722.00	\$792	\$41,202.72	
	2018	371	12	\$450,782.00	\$792	\$9,506.32	
	2019	360	63	\$656,769.00	\$792	\$49,916.68	\$116,417
	2020	374	45	\$455,827.00	\$792	\$35,656.20	\$69,501
JACKSON							
	2013	52	10	\$22,492.00	\$648	\$6,480.00	
	2014	36	8	\$808,169.00	\$648	\$5,124.00	
	2015	51	11	\$144,410.00	\$648	\$7,128.00	
	2016	60	14	\$444,289.00	\$648	\$9,072.00	
	2017	47	13	\$321,984.00	\$648	\$8,424.00	
	2018	18	6	\$387,569.00	\$648	\$3,856.00	
	2019	33	10	\$139,296.00	\$648	\$6,480.00	\$29,390
	2020	42	12	\$181,691.00	\$648	\$7,776.00	\$0
LACROSSE							
	2013	312	19	\$122,597.00	\$703	\$12,360.42	
	2014	371	19	\$532,101.00	\$703	\$12,360.42	
	2015	358	32	\$538,571.00	\$703	\$22,501.76	
	2016	296	36	\$812,039.00	\$703	\$25,314.48	
	2017	299	47	\$568,830.00	\$703	\$31,049.46	
	2018	317	62	\$418,124.00	\$703	\$43,597.16	
	2019	342	56	\$401,165.00	\$703	\$35,378.08	\$25,450
	2020	208	61	\$465,153.00	\$703	\$42,893.98	\$112,670
MONROE							
	2013	159	5	\$62,374.00	\$614	\$3,070.00	
	2014	156	13	\$307,783.00	\$614	\$7,982.00	
	2015	202	27	\$325,841.00	\$614	\$19,578.00	
	2016	104	17	\$241,632.00	\$614	\$10,438.00	
	2017	84	30	\$287,401.00	\$614	\$18,420.00	
Used Average	2018	147	18	\$209,912.00	\$614	\$11,052.00	
	2019	63	21	\$344,876.00	\$614	\$12,894.00	\$2,706
	2020	54	17	\$161,342.00	\$614	\$10,436.00	\$0
PEPIN							
	2013		4	\$47,456.00	\$854	\$3,416.40	
	2014	24	2	\$10,490.00	\$854	\$1,706.20	
	2015	11	0	\$265.00	\$854	\$0.00	
	2016	12	4	\$31,023.00	\$854	\$3,416.40	
	2017	9	3	\$6,487.00	\$854	\$2,562.30	
	2018	16	2	\$0.00	\$854	\$1,706.20	
	2019	17	5	\$3,016.00	\$854	\$2,562.30	\$0
	2020	18	3	\$62.00	\$854	\$2,562.30	\$0
POLK							
	2013	114	4	\$68,748.00	\$1,091	\$4,363.08	
	2014	106	11	\$228,508.00	\$1,091	\$11,998.47	
	2015	102	11	\$26,357.00	\$1,091	\$11,998.47	
	2016	117	22	\$161,439.00	\$1,091	\$23,996.84	
	2017	100	26	\$91,941.00	\$1,091	\$24,360.02	
	2018	78	22	\$175,321.00	\$1,091	\$23,996.84	
	2019	85	23	\$145,836.00	\$1,091	\$23,067.71	\$500
	2020	61	30	\$212,145.00	\$1,091	\$32,723.10	\$450
PIERCE							
	2013	61	13	\$118,500.00	\$1,043	\$13,533.75	
	2014	66	6	\$48,837.00	\$1,043	\$6,256.50	
	2015	96	11	\$87,037.00	\$1,043	\$11,470.25	
	2016	78	22	\$273,437.00	\$1,043	\$22,940.50	
	2017	73	19	\$287,288.00	\$1,043	\$19,812.25	
	2018	78	17	\$185,925.00	\$1,043	\$17,726.75	
	2019	57	11	\$425,723.00	\$1,043	\$11,470.25	\$0
	2020	48	18	\$467,073.00	\$1,043	\$18,789.50	\$0
RUSK							
	2013	12	0	\$500.00	\$882	\$0.00	
	2014	26	1	\$6,362.00	\$882	\$881.54	
	2015	17	0	\$1,289.00	\$882	\$0.00	
	2016	24	2	\$45,013.00	\$882	\$1,763.08	
	2017	26	5	\$34,158.00	\$882	\$4,407.70	
	2018	15	3	\$35,654.00	\$882	\$2,644.62	
	2019	19	3	\$16,697.00	\$882	\$2,644.62	\$0
	2020	23	11	\$97,977.00	\$882	\$8,696.84	\$0
ST CROIX							
	2013	165	14	\$68,816.00	\$915	\$12,801.28	

	2014	190	35	\$367,183.00	\$915	\$32,006.20	
	2015	141	37	\$138,263.00	\$915	\$33,037.24	
	2016	129	30	\$310,797.00	\$915	\$27,435.60	
	2017	133	51	\$326,672.00	\$915	\$46,640.52	
	2018	136	53	\$251,279.00	\$915	\$46,469.56	
	2019	134	49	\$407,411.00	\$915	\$44,851.48	\$22,281
	2020	123	47	\$185,555.00	\$915	\$42,961.64	50
TREMPEALEAU							
	2013	53	8	\$30,980.00	\$768	\$6,146.80	
	2014	89	6	\$78,421.00	\$768	\$6,146.80	
	2015	58	11	\$251,661.00	\$768	\$8,451.85	
	2016	53	13	\$145,755.00	\$768	\$9,868.55	
	2017	70	12	\$119,600.00	\$768	\$9,220.20	
Used Average	2018	62	53	\$51,144.00	\$768	\$39,954.20	
	2019	55	20	\$112,920.00	\$768	\$15,367.00	50
	2020	67	30	\$205,406.00	\$768	\$23,050.50	50
WASHBURN							
	2013	31	0	\$287.00	\$1,060	\$0.00	
	2014	27	0	\$9,373.00	\$1,060	\$0.00	
	2015	46	3	\$24,254.00	\$1,060	\$3,179.70	
	2016	40	6	\$17,781.00	\$1,060	\$6,359.40	
	2017	29	5	\$11,569.00	\$1,060	\$5,299.50	
	2018	38	4	\$6,450.00	\$1,060	\$4,239.60	
	2019	30	4	\$41,860.00	\$1,060	\$4,339.60	\$70,058
	2020	21	0	\$79,407.00	\$1,060	\$0.00	\$30,003
TOTALS ALL COUNTIES							
	2013	1825	96	\$987,722	** Saint Croix County estimated cost for one trip from each county seat to Winnebago.	*** Does not include transportation costs for other court appearances	Winnebago as % of the total Eds
	2014	2045	161	\$3,375,349			5%
	2015	1958	236	\$2,832,868			8%
	2016	1797	268	\$4,145,935			11%
	2017	1779	369	\$4,102,196			16%
	2018	1730	337	\$3,153,070			21%
	2019	1727	350	\$3,896,428			19%
	2020	1501	400	\$3,551,340			20%
Yearly average # of ED's for Region							27%
	2013	101					
	2014	114					
	2015	109					
	2016	100					
	2017	99					
	2018	96					
	2019	96					
	2020	83					
				* Source of above - CARS Report			

Clark County Sheriff's Office

Scott A. Haines
Sheriff



James A. Hirsch
Chief Deputy

517 Court Street-Room 308, Neillsville, WI 54456
Phone: 1-800-743-2420 or 715-743-5278
Confidential Tip Line: 888-847-2576 (TIP-CLSO)
Fax: 715-743-4350

March 16, 2021

Reference: Senate Bill 86

To whom it may concern,

We need to make this project happen. We need additional mental health beds so we can better treat patients. Their availability would greatly benefit citizens by making mental health treatment more accessible.

A closer facility for our county would allow us to better accommodate patients from our area and will allow speedier transports to and from the facilities. It will also reduce the time spent by tying up officers – which could take from 4 to 8 hours on an emergency detention incident. Another benefit will be that the patient's families/friend will be closer to our area for support purposes.

Thank you for helping our citizens and officers by moving forward and taking steps in making the Mental Health Beds Bill a reality.


Sheriff Scott Haines



CORNELL POLICE DEPT.

P.O. Box 796 • 221 Main Street
Cornell, WI 54732-1796

Phone: 715-239-3707
Fax: 715-239-3708

SB-86 / AB-92

Chairman Testin and Other Committee Members,

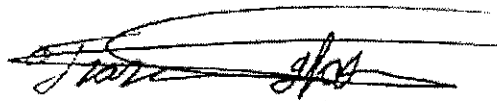
Members of our Police Department would like show support for these bills. In small towns like Cornell throughout NW Wisconsin having access to local mental health treatment beds increase public safety, and lower constraints on agencies with minimal staffing. When our Department must transport a mental health patient to Winnebago Mental Health, it is 380 miles, and 6 to 7 hours of transportation.

By passing these bills, our transportation lowers to around 70 miles and 2 hours. This is a significant step in the right direction for someone in a mental health crisis. Imagine you or a loved one having a mental health crisis, being placed in handcuffs and transported in the back of a police car, for nearly 4 hours. Then when you or your loved one are released, arrangements must be made for transportation home. Often mental health patients feel like a burden to their loved ones, this often exacerbates the situation.

Passing these bills is important to mental health patients and the care they receive. Passing these bills is also important for small communities like ours that only has one Officer on at a time, those 7 hours we must transport a patient; leave our entire City without Law Enforcement protection.

We hope our State Government can have bi-partisan support for this bill. It is a much needed improvement for mental health moving FORWARD, and after all, isn't that what our State stands for.

Respectfully Submitted by our Police Department,



TRAVIS HAKES

HOME OF THE HISTORIC WOOD STACKER & BRUNET ISLAND STATE PARK

Hello,

This is a statement of support for SB-86 and its companion bill AB-92. There has been a significant shortfall of inpatient psychiatric beds in Northern Wisconsin. In the NW region, there are just a few psychiatric inpatient units. These include Ashland, Mayo, Amery and Sacred Heart. 17 counties utilize these hospitals on a regular basis and are frequently in competition with one another for bed space. This has often resulted in the need for transporting residents currently in serious mental health crisis to the Winnebago Institute.

To describe the scenario, Winnebago is 5.5 hours away from Superior, WI. An individual in mental health crisis is not well served sitting in the back of a squad car for this period of time. Winnebago is often at or over capacity so you can see the need is integral. In addition, due to distance, the resident lacks natural supports as their friends and family are not able to access them. Natural supports are integral to recovery.

Law enforcement will provide the transport to Winnebago during an emergency detention. This removes the officer from the community for over 11 hours. This potentially has an impact on public safety as well impact on this officer.

Winnebago is an IMD and therefore may not be billed to medical assistance. The full cost of the per diem, can be excess of \$1000/day and is paid for by county tax levy. If a resident remains in Winnebago for any period of time, the cost can have a significant impact on a county's provision of other services. In addition to the per diem, the cost of transport which can be several thousand dollars also impacts the county. Winnebago is heavily needed and used across the state I am sure, but you can see by the example of how an increase in facilities could bring a lower impact on county levy and budget. In addition, and most importantly, opening more options would give the citizens who need the care most a chance for a better outcome being closer to supports and community resources.

SB-86 and AB-92 would provide the necessary support to counties to better serve their residents. Thank you for this consideration and your commitment to Wisconsin.

Kindly,

Anna Carlson, Director
and
Dave Longsdorf, Deputy Director

Douglas County Department of Health & Human Services
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Superior WI 54880
(715) 395-1318
(715) 395-1370 Fax
Anna.Carlson@douglascountywi.org

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Dunn County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Kevin Bygd
Chief Deputy Marshall Multhauf

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Communications Center: (715)232-1348
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Fax: (715)232-3900
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March 16, 2021

Chairman Testin and other committee members:

Thank you for hearing Senate Bill-86/AB-92.

I am writing you in support of this bill.

The need for more local psychiatric beds has been a problem that has been ongoing for many years and has seen much attention in the past couple years. We have still not seen any practical solutions come to fruition. Mental health issues are increasing not decreasing. This problem will not go away and needs to be addressed.

Because of limited capacity for psychiatric beds around the State and specifically at our local hospitals, Sheriff's Offices and Police Departments from the northwest and west central regions of Wisconsin often only find placement available at the Winnebago Mental Health Institute. From Dunn County, the transport of the patient in crisis to the Winnebago Mental Health facility is a 3 ½ hour trip one way. To accomplish such a lengthy transport, two deputies are assigned, which strains my agency's staffing and overtime budget.

This is not an occasional occurrence. Agencies from this side of the state frequently only find placement at the Winnebago facility which then also impacts bed availability for those agencies in the central, southern and eastern regions of Wisconsin.

As I mentioned, the lack of capacity has a very significant impact on law enforcement agency staffing and our budgets, however, I want to emphasize that the larger problem in this issue that can't be lost, is the delay in evaluation and treatment for those individuals who are taken into custody, that are currently suffering a mental health crisis.

Please give due consideration to this matter. Increased local capacity will greatly help address the issues faced by law enforcement agencies around the state. It will also help to get more patients suffering an emergency mental health crisis the treatment they need with much less delay.

Thank you for your time and attention to addressing a very significant mental health problem that has impacts felt daily within the State of Wisconsin.

Respectfully,

Sheriff Kevin Bygd
Dunn County, WI

March 16, 2021

I am writing this letter to show support of SB-86/AB-92. Supervising the Emergency Services DHS 34 Crisis Team within Eau Claire County DHS, I have firsthand involvement with emergency detentions that occur in our county. In 2020, we had 382 emergency detentions occur in our county.

Capacity of inpatient psychiatry beds is low in the entirety of the state. Being that Eau Claire has two hospitals with psychiatric units, Mayo and Sacred Heart, we commonly see situations in which there are no available inpatient psychiatric beds for individuals in need. People are coming from all areas of the state in hopes for psychiatric care. Because of this, in 2020, we had 99 emergency detentions occur with residents of other counties in Eau Claire primarily because they came to our community seeking mental health care and it was not available to them.

Not having inpatient psychiatric beds available in this area of the state causes much concern. Primarily, our community members are not able to receive needed services close to home when they are in crisis. Needing that level of care can be difficult in and of itself. Having to go hours away from home to receive those services can make things even worse. Waiting hours for the bed location process is a detriment to individuals in an active crisis situation. The hours spent by law enforcement transporting individuals under an emergency detention to other areas of the state pull them away from other needs in our community.

This grant and addition of psychiatric beds for both adults and adolescents would be a tremendous step in the right direction of improving mental health care to those living in this area of Wisconsin. I can speak on behalf of Eau Claire County DHS that we support forward movement with this particular bill.

Sincerely,

Lalita Prorok, MS, LPC

Lita Prorok, MS, LPC
Crisis Supervisor
Eau Claire County DHS
721 Oxford Ave
Eau Claire, WI 54703

Chairman Testin and other committee members.

Good afternoon members of Senate Committee on Health.

For 33 years I have been working as a mental health worker with Chippewa County. In addition since 2005 I have also worked in emergency mental health service i.e. crisis providing mobile mental health assessment and diversion for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. In 2020 Chippewa County had approximately 1200 crisis calls/episodes from a County with a population near 67,000. There were 112 emergency detentions of which 24 cases ended up with placement in WMHI. Our mobile crisis team works very hard to divert any hospitalization when safety can be ensured in the community. Having worked in the mental health field for 38 year I know the traumatic impact on an individual and their family when an emergency detention takes place. This includes securing the loved one on shackles and transporting the individual/child over 200 miles away from their family in an institutional setting. Imagine if the 14 year old child is yours and the trauma she/he endures at a time they are most vulnerable. It is essential that mental health care services are developed regionally to offer the best in continuity of care when someone is ready to transition back into their community. PLEASE support SB-86.

Thankyou.

Thomas Diel, CSW
Manager- Recovery Wellness Consortium
Chippewa County Department of Human Services.
711 N. Bridge St.
Chippewa Falls, WI. 54729
Direct Line 715-726-7803
Fax 715-726-4560
Email: tdiel@co.chippewa.wi.us



Human Services

The courthouse is open to the public and for the safety of visitors and employees, cloth face coverings are required until further notice. **Visitors are encouraged to call ahead to schedule an appointment or conduct business online or use the drop box located outside of Door #1.** As a proactive and responsible measure to COVID-19, we encourage the community to continue practicing safety measures including physical distancing, covering your coughs and sneezes, wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, avoid touching your face and stay home if you have cold or flu like symptoms. You may experience some delays in communication and we appreciate your patience and support during this time.

To Chairman Testin and other committee members:

My name is Olympia Smith, and I have seen the impact of mental health from my many different roles in the Eau Claire community. I have worked as a telephone crisis worker and mobile crisis worker, respite worker, and currently work as behavioral health social worker at one of the local psychiatric units in Eau Claire. In each role, I have observed the same thing the limited resources for mental health in our community. There is an increasing need for services especially for our youth population. In my role as a behavioral health social worker, I have witnessed the increased need for youth psychiatric admissions. We have parents or guardians calling for support and are scared for the safety for themselves or their loved one, but we were full. So, they were safety planned in the community and encouraged to try again once a bed was available. That is unacceptable. Our community is still in a middle of a pandemic, and the need for mental health services has increased. There are adolescents who travel from hours away to receive care for services, so if there is another resource for psychiatric admissions, it would relief a lot of stress and frustration from our community partners and adolescents in crisis.

I am support of the addition of mental health beds through HSHS. It will benefit the entire community to have the resource and give more support to the youth and parents or guardians. It will increase awareness of the impact of mental health for our youth and can provide education to our community. I am hoping with the addition of beds it will continue the conversation of mental health being a priority and reduce stigma. I am hoping it will provide relief to our law enforcement and crisis workers and parents.

Sincerely,

Olympia

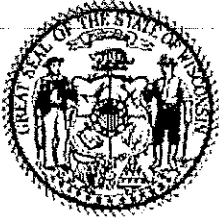
I support any and all increases to access for mental health resources for anyone seeking help in the Eau Claire and Chippewa county areas. My ex-husband, my son's father, has struggled with addiction for almost 30 years. He's diagnosed with several mental health disorders and has been in and out of prisons for much of his adult life. I wonder if he had access to resources when he was younger, if some of his struggles could have been avoided and my son could have a father. Because of my ex-husband's lifestyle, I've known people who died over the years from suicide, drugs or other related causes, and many more who continue to be in and out of jail, without any hope of recovery. Without hope, they give up. The community needs to step up and provide that hope.

Drug use is not the problem. It's a symptom. The real problem is untreated mental health issues. More beds is a great step in the right direction. We especially need space for youth. It's so important to address mental health at a young age to help people avoid the path of self-loathing, worthlessness and shame that leads many to drug use. I am that person who needed just that. Luckily, I was able to change my lifestyle after years in addiction and become a functioning member of society. I want to do anything I can to help people avoid what I lived through and what I see my ex-husband living.

On Tuesday, March 16, 2021, I drove my ex-husband to treatment when he asked for a ride. He's the person who has hurt me, and our son, the most and yet, I'll never stop trying to help him so my son can have his dad back. I want the community, the counties, and the state to do whatever they can to help people who want help too. Let's get more beds for mental health. And let's go from there. Those of us who have struggled; or are living, with mental health issues will support anyone who is trying to get help. We must help those who want help. It's part of our Wisconsin values and it keeps family's together.

Thank you,

Andrea Hoover
Volunteer with Take a Stand Against Meth
124 Terrence Street #7
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CHIPPEWA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

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Date: March 16, 2021
To: Chairman Testin and Other Members of the Senate Committee on Health
From: Wade C. Newell, District Attorney
RE: 2021 Senate Bill 86

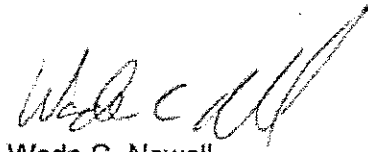
I am fully in support of 2021 SB 86, which will allocate a grant for the expansion of psychiatric bed capacity in the Chippewa Valley.

Untreated mental health issues can often lead to criminal behavior, and increased illegal drug use. Untreated mental health issues put a tremendous burden on the criminal justice system, which is often ill-equipped to effectively deal with mental health issues. As Chippewa County District Attorney, I believe increasing emergency detention beds capacity right here in the Chippewa Valley will have multiple system-wide benefits, to include:

- 1) Timely addressing of mental health needs, before the individual's behavior warrants intervention through the criminal justice system.
- 2) Reduced illegal drug usage, due to untreated mental health issues.
- 3) Reduced transportation and personnel costs for law enforcement, due to current emergency detention beds being all the way across the state.

I believe that increasing the psychiatric bed capacity will have a substantial payoff both in effectively treating mental health issues, and reducing the burden on the criminal justice system.

I would like to thank Senator Bernier for advancing this bill, and all the other Senators and Representatives that have co-sponsored this bill. I would like to thank Chairman Testin and the other members of the Senate Committee on Health for holding a hearing, and allowing me the opportunity to testify in support of this important mental health.



Wade C. Newell
District Attorney
Chippewa County



Strum Police Department

Trempealeau County – Chief Craig Marsolek
202 5th Avenue South – PO Box 25 – Strum Wisconsin 54770
Telephone 715-695-3513 – Fax 715-695-3196

March 17, 2021

RE: SB-86 and AB-92 / Mental Health Beds Bill

I am glad to see a bill that will finally starts to take the mental health crisis seriously. The problem was not created overnight, however this is the first step in the right direction.

The trip to WMHI from the Village of Strum is a 2 hour and 51 minute trip and 170 miles. This is if the weather is great. Add to the time of the medical clearance it could take a total of over 10 hours per officer (maybe even longer) and with a trip that long two officer would be needed. The opportunity to have beds on this side of the state is a win for all people in Wisconsin. It would free up bed space on both sides of the state. It would greatly reduce the risk of accidents in bad weather. It would not stress our resources and more importantly it would get the people who need the help faster.

I would be willing to talk about it at length.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig Marsolek".

Chief Craig Marsolek – Strum Police Department

Dear Sir,

I write in support of the effort to expand the availability of inpatient mental health treatment in northwestern Wisconsin. I was a police officer of the Eau Claire PD for 31 years. During that time, I had many occasions to deal with people in crisis and suffering from mental illness. In many cases we would transport sufferers to the local hospitals for assessment and treatment. The shortage of mental health beds in Eau Claire would sometimes force us to transport them to facilities with availability.

Some of those facilities were quite distant; Middle River near Solon Springs, to Madison, or to the Fox Valley area. Those transports required two officers for security. This put a major strain on an agency with (at that time) minimum shift staffing of six officers. This required calling in off duty officers on overtime for multiple-hour round trips. This was a significant expense, not to mention an ordeal for both the patients and the officers.

This bill would go far to alleviate a major difficulty for all concerned.

With respect,

Garth Melville
Lieutenant, Eau Claire Police Department (retired)

CHIPPEWA FALLS
POLICE
Integrity • Compassion • Commitment

March 17, 2021

Chairman Testin and other committee members:

Thank you for hearing AB-92/SB-86. 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



Trempealeau County Sheriff

36245 Main Street, P.O. Box 67
Whitehall, WI 54773-0067

Telephone: (715) 538-4509

Fax: (715) 538-4410

Visit our web site at <https://co.trempealeau.wi.us/>

E-mail your Sheriff at brett.semingson@co.trempealeau.wi.us

March 17, 2021

To: Wisconsin Senate Committee on Health
Attention: Chairman Patrick Testin

Dear Rep. Testin,

I write this letter to ask for Committee support for SB-86, and Assembly companion AB-92. Under the Bill there would be additional mental health beds added to the West Central Wisconsin Region, namely to HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital as an adult facility, and to St. Joseph's Hospital as a juvenile facility.

Currently, many of our Chapter 51 holds end up going to Winnebago Mental Health (WMH) in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. For us in Trempealeau County, from the center of the county, it is a 173 mile, three hour and ten minute drive, one way. We send two deputies on these transports due to the likelihood of the need to stop along the way. The Chapter 51 process requires that the patient return to court within 72 hours of being taken into custody, not counting weekends. This results in another long drive/ride to attend the court hearing, and then back to Winnebago in some cases.

The WMH facility is not a medical hospital. They require that we have the patient medically cleared at a local emergency room before they will accept the patient. Due to strict requirements of WMH, these medical clearances can take as long as eight to twelve hours.

Due to the length of travel and the times needed for medical clearance, it is not unheard of here in Trempealeau County for a person in crisis to be in the custody of police for up to 24 hours from the time of the initial call until they walk in the doors at WMH. The Chapter 51 process is very traumatic to persons in mental health crisis. They need the support of their families while they are in crisis. WMH can be too far away for many families to be there for their loved ones. To me, and to mental health organizations in our area, this is unacceptable. In 2020 our agency had 20 transports to WMH.

The passage of this Bill would mean that the accepting hospital is ½ hour away, and has its own emergency room, thus greatly reducing the amount of time the person in crisis is in police custody, and allowing families to offer the badly needed support.

I urge all our legislators to support this important piece of legislation which will provide support to those in crisis, their families and law enforcement. The mental wellbeing of all is our primary concern, but the secondary considerations are related to cost savings and the staffing hours that impact the budget. This would aid not just us but all law enforcement agencies in West Central Wisconsin.

Respectfully,


Sheriff Brett Semingson
Trempealeau County Sheriff's Office

Testimony on Senate Bill 86 - Relating to: grant to a hospital for expanding psychiatric bed capacity.

Thank you Chairman Testin and committee members for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 86 today. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with Rep. James on this important piece of legislation.

A mental health crisis is traumatic under any circumstances, but when the situation escalates to the point where a Chapter 51 emergency detention becomes necessary, the situation is often made worse by the need to transport individuals many hours away while restrained in the back of a squad car. The goal of this legislation is to reduce the time and stress of transporting emergency detention patients great distances from northern and western Wisconsin to Winnebago Mental Health Institute in Oshkosh by instead increasing the number of beds available regionally. Unfortunately, Winnebago has had several high-profile incidents lately, including most recently allowing an adolescent female to be released to a transport driver rather than her mother.

This bill won't solve Wisconsin's mental health crisis alone, but it will help those in crisis by keeping them closer to supporting family and friends, save county and local government resources and potentially serve as a model for similar efforts elsewhere in the state. Initial savings are estimated at \$2.7 million annually and could be much higher.

Senate Bill 86 directs a one-time \$15 million grant using bonding authority from the last budget for the startup costs of renovating existing facilities and training new staff to add 22 new mental health beds at an Eau Claire area hospital. Ongoing expenses would be absorbed by the hospital. The new and currently existing beds would be split between a 33 adult bed location and a dedicated 18 bed adolescent location nearby. That approaches the number of adolescent beds currently available at Winnebago MHI. This expansion would dramatically help with the difficulties of transporting individuals under Chapter 51 emergency detention to Winnebago MHI for 29 counties in northern and western Wisconsin. Traveling the 300 plus miles from northwest Wisconsin to Oshkosh can take over five hours each way.

Over the last three years these 29 counties have consistently accounted for 22 percent of the individual admissions received at Winnebago MHI. By serving the vast majority of individuals from these counties closer to home and reducing this number, the current strain on Winnebago could be reduced as well.

I ask you to please consider the passage of Senate Bill 86. Thank you again for allowing me to testify today.