

Senate signs off on bills to combat heroin, head to gov next

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The Senate overwhelmingly signed off on a series of bills designed to combat opioid addiction, the latest package of legislation to address Wisconsin's heroin problem.

Dems proposed several amendments to the bills, including one to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. They argued the move would provide more money to Wisconsin that could be used to combat heroin.

Each of the bills passed unanimously except for one.

The bills, which have already passed the Assembly and now head to the gov's desk, include:

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*SSAB 1, which would exempt some school, university, tech college and private college employees from liability for administering an Narcan or other opioid antagonists to students and others they believe is overdosing.

*SSAB 2, which would provide \$4.8 million over the next two years to increase funding to counties for treatment and diversion programs.

*SSAB 4, which would require a prescription for schedule V drugs containing opioid codeine, opium and difenoxin, among other ingredients.

*SSAB 6, which would allow the creation of a recovery charter high school for a maximum of 15 pupils at a time as part of a four-year pilot project. Sen. Steve Nass, R-Whitewater, was the only no vote on the bill.

Under the legislation, the director of the UW System's Office of Educational

Opportunity would contract with someone to establish and operate the recovery high school.

Nass said the director has already been asked to look into the achievement gap in Madison and Milwaukee. Adding this responsibility, he argued, would push that task aside.

"I don't know how he's going to do it all," Nass said.

*SSAB 7, which would allow the Department of Health Services to award grants to hospitals under an existing program to expand the number of physicians trained in an addiction specialty.

*SSAB 8, which would require DHS to create two or three regional treatment programs for opioids and methamphetamine in rural and underserved, high-need areas.

*SSAB 9, which would require DHS to create and administer an addiction medicine consultation program to help clinicians provide enhanced care for those with substance addiction.

*SSAB 10, which would authorize four criminal investigators at DOJ dedicated to drug interdiction and trafficking. The bill would provide \$840,000 over the next two years for the positions. If they are not filled by June 30, 2018, any unused money would be lapsed to the general fund and then put into the treatment alternatives and diversions grant program.

*SSAB 11, which would require the Department of Public Instruction to establish a mental health training program for screening, intervention and referral to treatment. It would allocate \$400,000 over the next two years for the training program.