

Rep. Bernier: State Assembly passes school safety package

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Anti-Bullying Measures, K-8 Curriculum Changes, and Mental Health Resources Highlight Reforms

Madison – Today in legislative session, the state Assembly passed a numbers of proposals focused on reducing and preventing school violence and curbing gun violence throughout Wisconsin.

The package of bills taken up by the Assembly provides \$100 million to schools to evaluate and improve security measures. This provision requires the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to work with the Department of Justice (DOJ) and local schools to develop and implement updated school safety plans.

“We’ve been working on these issues all session long,” Rep. Kathy Bernier (R-Lake Hallie) said. “This Extraordinary Session provides us an opportunity to make real change to improve our school safety plans.”

The bills passed today build on work done in the state budget which was passed last September. In the budget, \$150,000 is allocated annually for bullying prevention grants. These grants will focus on training and prevention related to electronic bullying. The curriculum changes are directed at K-8 students.

Additionally, the budget provided for two new aid programs to help address student mental health. Approximately \$6.25 million is allocated between School Mental Health Aid and Community and School Mental Health Collaboration Grants. These new programs will help schools connect with area health providers to meet

students' needs.

“The proposals passed today are just a starting point,” Rep. Bernier said. “We will remain vigilant and work with school officials, law enforcement, parents and students, and communities to address concerns of safety in our schools. Every child deserves a safe learning environment, and every parent deserves to know their children are safe when they kiss them goodbye in the morning.”

Other provisions adopted by the state Assembly today include: establishing the Office of School Safety within the DOJ; requiring mandatory reporting of any threat of school violence; adopting policies to encourage cooperation between local law enforcement and schools; and amending and strengthening the state’s bullying statute requiring prompt parent notification.