

Rep. Bowen: Statement on passage of Wisconsin Model of youth justice

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Madison – Rep. David Bowen (D-Milwaukee) issued the following statement upon the passage of legislation that would close Lincoln Hills/Copper Lake and establish regional Type 1 and local, secure residential treatment spaces.

“After years of stories of alleged abuse at Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake, a brief window of opportunity opened late last year to work across the aisle on a bill I had developed over the past year with local system and advocate stakeholders. As members from both parties endorsed the bill, which I introduced with Rep. Kleefisch, it slowly became clear there was an appetite for transforming this archaic system and replacing it with one that uses best practices to address the trauma plaguing so many young people who end up on this path.

“Several legislators had worked on this important issue in this session and previously, and I’m proud we all came to the table to develop a plan which culminates with the passage of AB 953 today. This plan brings the ideas and priorities of stakeholders, advocates, legislators, and other decision-makers together to create a new Wisconsin model of care, greatly increasing the chances of positive outcomes for kids, families, and taxpayers.

“In addition to new downsized, regional Type 1 spaces, this community-focused model will offer judges and counties the flexibility to place young people in local, secure residential environments focused on meaningful, trauma-informed care, restoring young people and giving them a real chance at leading positive lives as

contributors to our communities.

“This is one big step closer to even more innovations to save lives and money to increase the wellbeing of our communities, and keep youth and staff safe while reducing youth crime. Since 1996, this will stand as the largest change to advance in our juvenile justice system and I’m honored I had a lead role in contributing to it.”