

Ballweg criticizes DATCP secretary for failing to provide statistics on farmer mental health program

Posted on Friday, Jul 26, 2019

Rep. Joan Ballweg accused Ag Secretary Brad Pfaff of playing “a political game of keep away” as Republican lawmakers continue to pile criticism on the DATCP head.

Ballweg, who chairs the Speaker’s Task Force on Suicide Prevention, charged that Pfaff’s office, despite multiple requests, failed to provide her office statistics on a mental health program for farmers.

A spokeswoman for the Markesan Republican further alleged that DATCP then provided those statistics to “UpFront” host Adrienne Pedersen ahead of Ballweg’s pre-taped interview that will air Sunday as part of the show produced in partnership with WisPolitics.com.

“You can imagine my shock and disappointment when I took an interview today and was given statistics by the interviewer that I had requested from the department at an in-person meeting on July 2,” a statement from Ballweg read.

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

A DATCP spokeswoman declined to comment on the story.

Yesterday’s statement marked the second time in as many days that GOP lawmakers have clashed with Pfaff.

Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald today blasted Pfaff for “offensive and unproductive” criticism of the Legislature for failing to fund programs to reduce farmer suicides.

In the aftermath of Tuesday's Joint Finance Committee hearing, DATCP issued a press release in which Pfaff knocked Republicans on the panel for "abandoning our state's farmers."

"As of today, DATCP has funding to provide just five more counseling vouchers to farmers in need of mental health care," Pfaff said in the statement. "If the Joint Finance Committee doesn't want to move this funding forward immediately, then they have a choice to make: which five farmers will it be?"

Fitzgerald on Wednesday ripped those comments as "flippant" and "beneath your position" before highlighting actions the Legislature has taken over the past two sessions to address mental health.

"If you truly care about farmers' well-being, I hope that you will strive to work with legislators on addressing mental health in Wisconsin rather than releasing inflammatory statements," he said.

See Ballweg's release:

<https://twitter.com/RepBallweg/status/1154484178391457792>

See the DATCP release:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/190723-DATCP.pdf>

See Fitzgerald's letter:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/190724-Fitz-DATCP.pdf>