

Rep. Sargent: GOP male legislators attempt to speak on behalf of women, sorely miss the mark

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MADISON – Representative Melissa Sargent (D-Madison) released the following statement in response to the GOP’s brazen politicking regarding women’s health and safety over the past week:

“To my disbelief, today marks the second time within one week in which I have seen one of my bills pertaining to women’s health and safety circulated for co-sponsorship by a GOP male legislator. I am disheartened and saddened to see these two important pieces of legislation that I have worked on over the years, the authority to prescribe contraceptives by pharmacists and a sexual assault victim’s bill of rights, be released without my knowledge or input. Not only did these bills get put out by male legislators who have previously shown little leadership in these areas, but they failed to seek bipartisan support, and failed to consult or inform stakeholders in these respective areas. Further, these Republican members have stripped key components from these bills, watering down the original intent of the legislation and lessening the aid provided to women and other survivors of sexual assault.

While these GOP male legislators have attempted to speak on behalf of women in these areas, they have sorely missed the mark. Given their lack of bipartisanship,

their stripping of key components within these bills, and their hasty timing, it feels all too evident that these bills are nothing more than a rhetorical talking point to my colleagues, rather than a true attempt at caring for women's rights.

I pride myself on working across the aisle in a bipartisan fashion in an effort to find areas of common interest and in order to pass legislation that helps all Wisconsinites, and I commend my colleagues across the aisle who show an earnest attempt to work in a bipartisan manner as partners on these issues. While I wish I could say I was truly happy to see the GOP is showing more interest in improving women's health and standing up for survivors of sexual assault, I must also point out the irony that some Republicans have chosen to suddenly show an interest in these areas that Democratic legislators have been working on session after session, while at the same excluding those very legislators who have gained crucial expertise and community partnerships, and have changed the very movement and conversation in these areas.

Masking their anti-woman agenda with these bills and stooping so low that they feel the need to take legislation that Democrats have been championing for years is unacceptable. These issues must be seen as more than a rhetorical talking point, and should not be subjected to the GOP's brazen politicking regarding women's health and safety. I am proud to continue to work on these bills, with and for women, along with the many other legislators, stakeholder groups, and community members who deserve a seat at the table."