

Tyler Vorpapel: Pre-existing conditions should never limit access to affordable health insurance

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Eight years ago, I was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes, also known as Juvenile Diabetes. No one in my family had been diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes, so as a healthy 26-year-old I wasn't prepared.

At the time, I was mostly concerned about how I would manage this diagnosis day-in and day-out for the rest of my life. There is no cure for Type 1 Diabetes, so it's a daily regimen of checking blood sugars, keeping track of everything you eat, your stresses and physical activity, and balancing all of this with insulin.

Back then the farthest thing from my mind was the cost I would incur for the rest of my life.

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Each year I have a minimum of four doctor appointments with my general physician, my endocrinologist, and my ophthalmologist. I also use test strips to determine my blood sugar eight to ten times a day, control my insulin pump to keep my blood sugars in range. And all of these expenses would really add up if it weren't for insurance.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 8% of Wisconsinites are diagnosed with some form of diabetes, and 28% of Wisconsinites have diabetes and don't even know it.

Health insurance coverage is vital for every single one of these people with a pre-existing condition like it is for me and so many others.

Wisconsin has the opportunity to be ready in case something happens to the federal protections for people with pre-existing health care needs. Assembly Republicans have worked diligently to make this happen. Unfortunately, health care has become so divisive in our political conversation that state-level protections have yet to become reality.

Health care professionals don't diagnose and make different plans of treatment if they're Republicans or Democrats. They don't draw lines in the sand or take an all-or-nothing approach. They find the best course of action for their patients and carry it out, hoping to make whatever progress they can.

Over the past several years, we have come together as policymakers to move Wisconsin forward on a number of health care initiatives — including helping seniors with Alzheimer's and dementia, covering all those in poverty under BadgerCare, and expanding access to medication-assisted treatment for those who struggle with addiction. We've done this with broad bipartisan support, and the fight to cover pre-existing conditions should be no different.

I am so grateful for the quality health care that helps me manage my diabetes, and I understand its costs. No matter the situation, everyone deserves to have access to quality health care insurance.

No matter what party they belong to, Wisconsinites can count on me to do all I can to work with my colleagues so they can get personalized and affordable health care. I hope that in the very near future these protections will become reality.

-Vorpapel, R-Plymouth, represents the 27th Assembly District, which includes Cleveland, Elkhart Lake, Howards Grove, Kiel, Kohler, Plymouth and Sheboygan.