

Joint Finance Committee Dems: Republican inaction continues

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MADISON- Today the Republican-controlled Joint Finance Committee quickly adjourned without addressing the record-breaking number COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths our state has faced in recent weeks. It has now been 169 days since the Legislature passed bi-partisan legislation responding to the pandemic and the safety nets passed this spring will expire at the end of this year, now less than 100 days away.

With Republicans again failing to rise to meet the moment, the Democratic members of the Joint Finance Committee responded with the following statements:

“As new COVID cases have spiked and hospitalizations followed, many of our state’s health systems are near the brink. It’s been almost half a year since the Legislature acted to address this crisis and things have gotten worse and worse. Today was another missed opportunity for Republican leadership. One bright spot has been the state’s fiscal condition, which was improved thanks to increased federal funds for the state’s Medicaid program. Working much like a fiscal pilot program for Medicaid expansion, nearly \$120 million in state funds have been saved and helped to avoid a deficit this year. This financial benefit will end in December unless legislative Republicans listen to the people of Wisconsin and act on Medicaid expansion,” said Representative Goyke.

“Many of the same people who rushed to the Senate floor to greet Secretary Pompeo have sat idly by, watching a global pandemic worsen in their own backyard,” said Senator Erpenbach. “Meanwhile, neither they, nor their colleagues in Congress, have a plan for when thousands of people lose their health insurance

coverage because the only thing important enough to show up for is dismantling the ACA.”

“During the biggest pandemic in over a century, we should be doing everything in our power to increase access to affordable health care. It is disappointing that Wisconsin Republicans have taken no action for 24 weeks to help people in need,” said Representative Kolste. “Today, we could have worked together to accept the Medicaid expansion, which 39 other states have done. This alone would save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars and give tens of thousands of Wisconsinites access to needed health care. As the newest member of the Joint Committee on Finance, I was hoping to see more urgency from my Republican colleagues in finding ways to lead our state through this pandemic. Democrats will continue advocating for policies that keep Wisconsinites healthy, safe, and secure through this public health crisis.”

“At a time when ensuring access to health care, fighting for equity and justice, and protecting taxpayers and our economy are central themes in our conversations about creating a better future for children and families, few things would make as significant of an impact to all three as Medicaid Expansion,” said Senator Johnson. “It’s time.”