

Patched: Vos' inaction facilitates re-victimization of trauma survivors

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(Madison, WI) – Trauma survivor and advocate Adrienne Melby today drew further public attention to Assembly Speaker Robin Vos' ongoing failure to act on behalf of Wisconsin's 1.7 million trauma survivors, who comprise nearly a third of the state's population. Melby, who resides in Vos' Assembly District, is the founder of Patched, a new network and public voice for trauma survivors.

For weeks Vos has avoided taking a public stand against Governor Evers' mask mandate.

Despite overtures on the part of Sen. Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, Vos has similarly refused to work with the State Senate to overturn the governor's mandate via joint resolution.

Vos' inaction in relationship to the mask mandate has facilitated agonizing struggles for trauma survivors. During a meeting that Vos requested with Melby and her husband on August 3rd, it became clear to the couple that the Speaker had prioritized his own political comfort over the ongoing plight of trauma survivors statewide.

In calling Speaker Vos to account in an Aug. 19 press release, Melby shared some of her own challenges under the governor's order. J. Alexander, another survivor in Melby's growing Patched network, today spoke out for the same purpose. Alexander experienced profound sexual and psychological abuse for years before escaping to begin a long path to healing.

"You cannot know what it's like to turn 70," said Alexander of life under the mask mandate,

“thinking you can finally feel safe and set about quietly enjoying your golden years, when the opposite happens.”

A recent appointment at a medical facility—a place that should feel safe—quickly became a nightmare for Alexander. Multiple WARNING signs and streams of yellow CAUTION tape, used to forbid access to once-populated seating areas, triggered high anxiety levels. When two faceless medical personnel pushed a mask into her hand and brusquely pointed a gun like thermometer at her head, she couldn't overcome her rising panic. She ran for the exit.

“When I returned, neither individual showed one ounce of empathy.” Nor did they ask Alexander any questions to try to understand her reaction. “It was business as usual.”

“For me, a mask symbolizes restriction and domination. I struggle with self-isolation and shaming because of the mask issue, but I've scolded myself enough. If we continue to remain silent we might as well just lay still and say to those in power, ‘Rape me,’ because that's what's happening. We're being gagged, smothered, stripped of our rights, and forced to be complacent. I won't be gagged about my PTSD. I won't be shamed by people who have no context for understanding what I've lived.”

If she and Alexander as trauma survivors are brave enough to take a stand against the governor's mask mandate, Melby wants to know why Vos—as a state leader—is not.