

Rep. Hintz: Introduces statewide plan for school-based mental health care resources

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MADISON – Today, Representative Gordon Hintz (D-Oshkosh) co-authored two amendments to increase access statewide to school-based mental health care services. One amendment would provide \$22 million annually in categorical aids for school mental health services. The other would provide \$14 million in grant funding to school districts for collaboration with community health agencies to provide mental health services to pupils. Republicans rejected each of these amendments along party lines. Rep. Hintz released the following statement regarding these amendments:

“If you talk to any teacher, principal, or administrator across the state, they will tell you they need more resources to deal with school-based mental health care. After the officer-involved shooting at Oshkosh West High School, my superintendent and I discussed the challenges school districts face to meet the mental health needs for students across all grade levels. There is a significant demand for resources, and we must do all we can to fund these important programs.”

The amendments introduced today were based on Governor Evers budget proposal which included important mental health care funding and programs including:

- \$44 million for mental health services in schools that could go toward hiring counselors, psychologists or nurses. The Legislature approved \$6 million.

- \$14 million for grants for schools to collaborate with health agencies to provide therapy and other services to students. The Legislature approved \$6.5 million.
- \$5.16 million for mental health and school climate training, which districts could use for training school resource officers how to handle a student in crisis. The Legislature approved \$220,000.

The increased funding for the mental health grants to schools has already proven to be successful. The Department of Public Instruction reported that in the first year of this program (2018-19) 141 applications were received, representing 182 schools districts. 52 received funding under the program, indicated there is more demand than grant funding available.

“If we, as legislators, are serious about addressing mental health care access in our schools, we need to do more than a pilot program in one county. We know what works because the funding and programs the governor proposed in his budget were built off of existing programs with high participation rates. Democrats will continue to work hard to give our schools the resources they need to support our students and keep them safe.”