

Rep. Kitchens: Supports COVID-19 relief package

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MADISON, Wis. – Rep. Joel Kitchens (R-Sturgeon Bay) was proud to join his Assembly colleagues today in an extraordinary session to pass a bipartisan relief package that will provide assistance to Wisconsinites who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Both Republicans and Democrats in the state Legislature have been working together on this comprehensive legislation for weeks, and the action we took this afternoon shows exactly what we can accomplish when we put politics aside and instead focus on finding solutions,” Rep. Kitchens said. “Our COVID-19 Response Bill will go a long way toward helping our residents, business owners and healthcare workers get through and recover from the coronavirus outbreak in Wisconsin.”

The relief package eliminates the one-week waiting period for unemployment insurance benefits. These benefits will be applied retroactively to claims made after March 12 and will run through Feb. 7, 2021. The bill also allows the state to obtain additional federal funding for various Medicaid programs. The state will receive an extra \$150 million for each quarter that the coronavirus pandemic continues.

Furthermore, the legislation tries to keep healthcare costs down by prohibiting insurers from charging patients more for getting treatment through out-of-network providers and from discriminating against people based on whether they’ve had COVID-19. All insurers will also be required to cover the co-pays for coronavirus testing.

In addition, the relief package sets aside \$75 million to address future unexpected issues that federal funding doesn’t cover and provides flexibilities to school districts to complete the school year online.

The bill also ensures that Wisconsin will receive the entire \$2 billion in federal assistance that Gov. Evers has sole discretion over spending. Legislative leadership has asked the governor to prioritize the needs of the healthcare industry, workers, small businesses and local governments when allocating these dollars.

The Wisconsin State Senate is expected to consider the legislation on Wednesday.

“Given the strong bipartisan support behind the COVID-19 Response Bill, we are hopeful that the governor will sign it into law,” Rep Kitchens said. “He must do so by Friday in order for us to qualify for an initial \$300 million in federal funds that will go toward paying for medical expenses through the state’s Medicaid programs.”