

Rep. Stafsholt: Votes to provide increased mental health access to northwestern Wisconsin

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New Richmond, WI – Rep. Rob Stafsholt (R- New Richmond) voted to pass Assembly Bill 639, which provides greater access to mental health institutions in northwestern Wisconsin. “I introduced this legislation after working on mental health issues with law enforcement and health care professionals in my district,” said Rep. Stafsholt.

Assembly Bill 639 creates a pilot program for hospitals located in Barron, Burnett, Dunn, Pierce, St. Croix, Polk, and Washburn Counties to house emergency detention patients and receive reimbursement for those receiving in-patient mental health treatment. This is a voluntary program for local hospitals.

“The process currently in place of hauling our citizens that are in a mental health crisis situation from northwestern Wisconsin in handcuffs for hours over to a facility in Winnebago is not working for anyone involved. It is a burden on local law enforcement’s time and resources to drive citizens who are in crisis across the state, leaving us under-covered at home. It breaks local and county budgets, and most importantly it is not helpful to people in that crisis situation,” added Stafsholt. “However, it is even more troublesome to move those at-risk citizens to and from their support networks of family, friends, and regular doctors. This bill provides a local solution in our regional hospitals to provide the care that’s needed for these patients,” concluded Stafsholt.

Assembly Bill 639 recently passed the State Assembly and is awaiting passage by the State Senate. If approved in the State Senate, the bill will be sent to the Governor’s desk for approval.