

Sen. Carpenter: Legislation aimed at protecting health care workers

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(MADISON) – State Senator Tim Carpenter today announced that he has drafted legislation to provide severe penalties for anyone who is found to have committed battery, or threatened to do so, to a state or local health department official, employee, or a member of that person’s family.

“I had begun work on the bill prior to this past Sunday’s article in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* that illustrates what health care workers are facing right now,” said Carpenter. “I had heard from some people who have already been faced with threats simply for doing their jobs. That is not acceptable.”

Senator Carpenter said he will introduce the bill upon the commencement of the 2021-2022 Legislative Session.

“We have health care workers doing the best they can do in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, and they should never have to face anyone who maybe believes it’s all a hoax,” said Carpenter. “They are doing their jobs – and thank goodness for them in doing so – and they absolutely do not need threats to them or their families. I really can’t believe what I’m hearing and reading.”

Senator Carpenter’s legislation would be based on current Wisconsin law that provides for a felony charge for anyone causing bodily harm or threatening to cause bodily harm to certain state and local officials and their families.

“The bill is aimed at protecting those health care workers who have already been threatened during this pandemic,” said Carpenter. “It also provides protections for poll workers and other local officials who help shepherd our elections. If you cause bodily harm or threaten to do so to a local health care worker or election official, or one of their family members, you are going to pay a steep price.”

While current law already makes it a Class I felony to cause bodily harm or threaten to cause bodily harm to many state and local officials, and in some cases, their family members, Carpenter’s bill extends the prohibition to include employees who are working for a local health department in any capacity, along with that person’s family. It would be a Class H felony if found guilty.