

Sen. Shilling: Republicans vote to legalize discrimination

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MADISON, WI – Among a wild scramble of activity this week, far-right Republican politicians pushed through legislation to allow certain health care providers the ability to deny patients care based on the individual's gender, sexual orientation, or pre-existing medical condition. The proposal, Assembly Bill 26, was vehemently opposed by Democratic lawmakers after Republicans voted to gut the anti-discrimination protections that had been proposed for direct primary health care providers. Without these protections, thousands of Wisconsin residents could be denied access to quality care through no fault of their own.

“Here we are in the 21st century, and yet we still have Republican politicians who think it's ok to treat people like second class citizens simply because of their gender or sexual orientation,” said Senate Democratic Leader Jennifer Shilling (D-La Crosse). “No one should face discrimination in our society – especially when it comes to health care. Wisconsin Democrats believe our communities are strengthened when everyone has access to health care and are treated fairly under the law. No matter how many times Republicans try to take us back to the days when individuals could be denied care based on their gender, sexual orientation, or pre-existing medical condition, Democrats will stand united with Wisconsin families and oppose discrimination.”

While Assembly Bill 26 had originally included comprehensive anti-discrimination protections, Republicans unanimously adopted Amendment 2 to gut this provision. In addition to allowing discrimination based on pre-existing conditions, the non-partisan Wisconsin Legislative Council noted that “the amendment removes the following from the list of explicitly prohibited bases for discrimination: gender; gender identity; national origin; sexual orientation; and ‘any other protected class.’”