

# U.S. Rep. Kind: Announces federal funding for Wisconsin telehealth services and distance learning

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**La Crosse, WI** —Today, **Rep. Ron Kind** announced close to \$2,000,000 in grants to support telehealth services and distance learning in Wisconsin. The grants, approved by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development, were awarded to St. Vincent Hospital and the HSHS System to help purchase telehealth equipment and expand access to services and to Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) 10 to upgrade schools' distance learning technology and provide resources to help overcome disparities experienced by rural school districts.

“So many important aspects of our lives have moved online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including education and health services,” said **Rep. Ron Kind**. “It’s critical to ensure communities across Wisconsin, particularly in our rural areas, have access to vital services regardless of where they live. That’s why I’m glad to announce these grants to expand access to telehealth services and distance learning for all Wisconsinites, and will continue fighting to ensure our rural communities have the resources they need throughout this crisis.”

“This award for telemedicine equipment will serve 455,000 lives in 20 rural counties. It will help HSHS save countless lives and improve quality of care by providing tele-behavioral health services, expanded tele-health care for substance use disorders, and tele-stroke care to patients in communities that have otherwise limited access to health care resources,” said **Josh Gustafson, MBA-HCM, Director, Business Development & Strategic Partnerships, Prevea Health**

## **and HSHS Wisconsin.**

The USDA Rural Development investment for St. Vincent and the HSHS System will be used to address rural health professional shortages, particularly opioid and substance use disorder clinicians and behavioral health specialists, expand tele-stroke care, and help establish a telemedicine hub. The investment for CESA 10 will be used to help implement a distance learning technology upgrade, allow for cloud-based bridging and provide videoconferencing endpoints at 39 school districts in 14 counties in west central Wisconsin, and expand resources for rural school districts.

As a [member](#) of the House of Representatives Rural Broadband Task Force, Rep. Kind has been an advocate for expanding rural broadband access to end the rural-digital divide by 2025 and ensure all students are able to continue receiving a high quality education as some schools move to online learning. Additionally, Rep. Kind has [supported efforts](#) to expand and improve Wisconsinites' access to telehealth services beyond the COVID-19 crisis.