

Reps. Vining, Considine, Brostoff, Moore Omokunde: Support sustainable funding for school mental health programs

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MADISON – Today, the Assembly Committee on Mental Health held a public hearing on Assembly Bill 564, which would require the Governor to allocate \$100 million of federal American Rescue Plan Act dollars to school mental health programs. The federal ARPA dollars have all been allocated to COVID-19 relief and recovery programs. There currently is \$550 million in general purpose revenue available to the state, due to Governor Evers' partial veto authority with the state budget, that the Governor has stated should be allocated for school funding, including mental health funding, after Republicans in the legislature cut the proposed funding amounts for school-based mental health programs.

The Democratic members of the Assembly Mental Health Committee — State Representative Robyn Vining (D-Wauwatosa), Rep. Dave Considine (D-Baraboo), Rep. Jonathan Brostoff (D-Milwaukee), and Rep. Supreme Moore Omokunde (D-Milwaukee) — issued the following statement in response to AB 564:

“Republicans need to stop playing politics with our kids. Not another day can pass that we do not take seriously the mental health of Wisconsin’s children. Republicans have not put forth a serious effort to appropriately fund the long-term mental health needs of Wisconsin kids.

“The Republican proposal is one-time funding. We have proposed a [substitute amendment](#) to this bill that is a long-term mental health proposal that includes the sustainable funding source that school districts need.

“School districts were loud and clear during the budget process about what they needed for this school year and next: long-term, sustainable funding. Governor Evers included this funding in his proposed budget and Republicans removed it. If Republicans had approved Governor Evers’ education budget as proposed, or had not gaveled in and out of the education special session, schools would have the resources they need.

“Governor Evers gave us an opportunity with his budget partial vetoes to provide hundreds of millions of additional funding for our schools. Wisconsin has the funds. We can fund long-term mental health initiatives right now, and we should.”