

Rep. Loudenbeck: Two Loudenbeck bills head to Governor

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Madison- Today, two bills authored by Rep. Amy Loudenbeck (R-Clinton) passed the Wisconsin State Senate with bipartisan support, and are now waiting for final action by the Governor.

Assembly Bill 820, co-authored with Senator Alberta Darling (R-River Hills), modernizes the language for the Mike Johnson Life Care & Early Intervention Services Grant to include access to clinical services and lab work related to receiving Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for individuals vulnerable to HIV. PrEP is a medication that significantly reduces vulnerable individuals' odds of contracting HIV.

The first "life care" grant funding for HIV and AIDS services started in 1987. It was later renamed the "Mike Johnson Life Care & Early Intervention Services Grant", in honor of an advocate from Milton, Wisconsin who shared his personal story with people from over 40 states before he passed away in 2010. The grant has been instrumental in helping organizations assist Wisconsinites living with HIV by ensuring they have access to integrated medical, dental, mental health, and social services that allow them to live long and healthy lives.

"In the 30 years since the initiation of the grant program, there have been significant biomedical advancements in the field of HIV prevention. This bill updates the grant program to allow funds to be used to provide access to these advancements and also tightens up the definition of potential grantees to safeguard this critical assistance for individuals at high risk for or living with HIV," said Loudenbeck.

Assembly Bill 874, co-authored with Senator Mary Felzowski (R-Irma), would require DHS to submit a Medicaid state plan amendment to allow for Wisconsin EMS providers to take part in supplemental payment opportunities for public and private EMS providers. If approved by CMS, these supplemental payments could help to alleviate some of the funding pressure on EMS service providers.

These supplemental payment opportunities would help minimize typical losses when providing Medicaid covered services. Allowing Wisconsin's EMS providers to take part in these programs will be beneficial to the patients they're serving, as better funding can increase access and quality outcomes, ensuring proper care in the right place, at the right time, with the right solutions. This will also be beneficial to taxpayers, as many communities are facing increased costs related to providing critical EMS services, and are often seeing these costs increase their property taxes.

Other states have started using CMS approved supplemental payment programs for both private and public EMS services to pay effectively higher reimbursement rates, without using additional state GPR funding. There are currently no comparable financing mechanisms for EMS providers in Wisconsin.

"EMS providers across Wisconsin are facing significant issues with funding and staffing. These challenges are negatively impacting EMS providers in urban and rural areas alike," said Loudonbeck. "There isn't a one size fits all solution to address all of these issues, but this bill is a sustainable, long term solution that can help to start addressing this issues and ensuring the EMS system as a whole is viable and successful for years to come."