Rep. Sinicki: Hosts Wisconsin's first Patient Safety Advocacy Day

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MADISON– The Wisconsin Legislature's first Patient Safety Advocacy Day is taking place in the State Capitol today.

At a press conference this morning, Rep. Christine Sinicki (D-Milwaukee) was joined by Sen. LaTonya Johnson (D-Milwaukee) to announce three bills proposing remedies to help prevent and mitigate medical error tragedies.

 "Over the last several legislative sessions, I have worked with families who shared their heartbreaking experiences with medical errors that harmed and took the lives of their loved ones. I was deeply moved by their stories," said Rep. Sinicki.

[Assembly Bill 1011](#), named "the Julie Rubenzer Act" and also called the "Surgical Black Box" bill, requires that surgical patients be offered the option to have their surgical procedures and discharge instructions videotaped. [Assembly Bill 923](#), "Judie's Law," adds adult children to the list of relatives entitled to damages due to harm or death of a parent. [Assembly Bill 924](#) increases the cap on recoverable medical malpractice damages.

Rep. Sinicki continued, "Senator Johnson and I introduced these bills in honor of those who have been hurt by medical malpractice, to prevent this from happening to others."

"These bills will update state law so that patients and their families are adequately compensated when a medical error occurs," Sen. Johnson added. "Through this, patients and their families can begin the healing process, free from the worry that their bills will go unpaid due to a life altered by medical error." The announcement of legislation was followed by remarks from individuals who lost loved ones to

medical error and national health care experts engaged in patient safety reform.

Cedarburg resident Wade Ayer shared the story of his sister, Julie Rubenzer, a marathon runner who went in for a routine breast augmentation and ended up on life support. Julie was in a hypoxic coma for 3 months before tragically dying in December 2003.

"There was no medical investigation whatsoever into the cause of Julie's death. By having a surgical black box in the surgical suite, we could have had a quick and thorough investigation into what happened," Ayer said.

Steve Burrows, creator of HBO's critically acclaimed documentary, *Bleed Out*, shared the story of his mother, Judie Burrows, who was a retired special education teacher from Milwaukee. "My Mom went in for routine partial hip replacement and came out in a coma with permanent brain damage," Burrows shared. "What happened to her was a pure medical disaster, and yet situations like happen every single day in this country. I never expected to become an advocate for patient safety, but I wanted to make sure that no one ever suffers like my Mom did," Burrows added.

National experts participating in the panel discussion include Dr. David Mayer, Executive Director of MedStar Institute for Quality & Safety (MIQS); Martin Hatlie, CEO of Project Patient Care; Ralph Johnson, VP of Informatics and Technology for The Leapfrog Group; Mark Thomsen, Partner at GTW Lawyers. Audrey Nowakowski of WUWM's *Lake Effect* is the moderator. Patient Safety Advocacy Day will conclude with a screening of *Bleed Out.*