

Sen. Hutton: Controlling healthcare costs is key to local funding challenges

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BROOKFIELD – In this week’s GOP radio address, State Senator Rob Hutton (R-Brookfield) discusses a key cost driver for local government and school district budgets: the cost of healthcare. Instead of raising property taxes, getting control over the ballooning cost of health benefits is a critical long-term reform that will benefit local governments, public employees, and taxpayers.

The transcript is below and the audio can be found [here](#).

“Property taxes are going through the roof across Wisconsin as local officials struggle to address tight municipal budgets and families lose more of their spending capital. But taxpayers shouldn’t face a choice between cuts to critical services and funding more government.

“Hi, this is State Senator Rob Hutton. Elected officials at all levels must address what’s causing this significant increase. What employers and families already know is the rising cost of healthcare is one of the primary drivers.

“Over the past decade, employer costs for health benefits have skyrocketed, now exceeding tens of thousands of dollars per employee. That can mean spending millions more each year just to try to maintain the same level of benefits as the year prior.

“This issue alone has risen to become a leading factor in small business closures across our great state.

One example of rising health care costs is the Mukwonago School District, which is

facing a 35% healthcare cost increase — that is a \$2.5 million hike in just one year. Another is in Dane County, where the cost of healthcare benefits has doubled since 2017. That just isn't sustainable.

“One of the most effective tools we have when we do our shopping is price transparency.

“When moms and dads shop for items at the grocery or hardware store, they immediately know the cost of those items and can compare and budget accordingly. Unfortunately, that same transparency doesn't exist in our healthcare industry.

“Too often, employers and patients don't know what they'll be charged until after that bill arrives — and the bills themselves are often filled with charges that are hard to decipher.

“That's why I joined my Republican colleagues to advance bills that make hospital prices available to consumers before a service is delivered, and another bill that would require insurance companies to provide essential data that helps employers find better value for their employees.

“Instead of passing the buck to homeowners and small businesses, we should focus on reforms that directly lower the cost of healthcare while increasing the quality of care for patients.

“That's a win for local governments, public employees, and our hard-working taxpayers.”