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Rep. Duchow Supports Suicide Prevention Bill Package

Madison, WI – On Thursday, Representative Cindi Duchow (R-Delafield) voted in favor of a package of bills aimed at reducing the incidence of suicide challenging the state of Wisconsin. The eight bills passed by the Assembly came at the recommendation of the bipartisan Speaker’s Task Force on Suicide Prevention, of which Rep. Duchow is a member of. The task force sought input from mental health advocates, medical professionals, families and survivors at six public hearings across the state, assessing current resources and opportunities to connect struggling individuals and their families to the help they need.

“I am proud the Assembly approved this incredibly important package of legislation. Every nine hours someone dies by suicide here in Wisconsin, according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention,” said Rep. Duchow. “Suicide is a tragedy that impacts communities in all corners of our state. Together, we need to do all we can to identify and assist those in crisis and in need of help. These bills are a start and will hopefully save lives.”

The legislation takes an evidence-based approach and targets some of our most vulnerable populations like our veterans, farmers, and youth. The crux of the package is the creation of a Statewide Suicide Prevention Director to help coordinate prevention services. Other components include grants to grow the number of local mental health organizations, expanding training grants, grants for peer support programs in schools, establishing interim psychology licenses and placing the suicide hotline number on the back of student school ID cards.

Rep. Duchow authored Assembly Bill 528 which creates grants to implement peer-to-peer suicide prevention programs in high schools across the state. Trained student leaders that come out of these evidence-based peer programs are more likely to refer suicidal peers to a trained adult and they enhance the protective factors that help reduce suicide in our youth populations.

“All too often, adolescents struggling with mental health and suicidal thoughts do not know who to turn to for help or are too embarrassed to speak up. When they do, many confide in a friend far before a parent, teacher or trained adult,” Rep. Duchow said. “Peer-led programs like HOPE Squad and Sources of Strength help diminish some of the negative stigma around seeking help and increase the perception of adult support in a positive matter. Giving our schools the tools they need to implement such programs will increase awareness and may save many young lives.”

There are resources currently available for individuals who may need help. The phone number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Individuals can also text “HOPELINE” to 741741 for assistance.

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Representative Duchow represents the 99th Assembly District which includes the communities of Chenequa, Delafield, Dousman, Hartland, Merton, Nashotah, Oconomowoc Lake, Ottawa, and Wales; and portions of Genesee, North Prairie, Oconomowoc, and Summit.