



GAE MAGNAFICI

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 28th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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The Fight for Mental Health Facility in Northwest Wisconsin Continues

This past summer, the Wisconsin legislature passed the state's biennial budget. The budget included \$15 million for a regional mental health facility in Chippewa Falls. This facility would have an estimated savings of \$38,000 for Burnett County, \$105,000 for Polk County, and \$196,000 for St. Croix County.

Unfortunately, Governor Evers vetoed this facility out of the budget and instead redirected the money to Madison.

The facility was intended to address the transportation problem associated with Chapter 51 involuntary detentions when people are suffering a mental health crisis. When officers from Polk, Burnett, or St. Croix counties respond to these cases, they must often travel up to 10 hours round-trip to Oshkosh. During this trip, our local police must operate with two less officers.

There is no doubt this trip takes a toll on the person being transported as well. These people are in a mental health crisis, and for many of them it is the worst day of their lives. A Chippewa facility that handles these cases would reduce this travel time by more than half.

On Thursday, I joined my Republican Assembly colleagues in attempting to override the Governor's veto of this facility. Only 3 additional Democratic votes were needed to override the veto and make the facility a reality. Unfortunately, not a single Democrat, including representatives from Douglas, Burnett, Washburn, Bayfield, and Eau Claire counties, voted to fund the Chippewa Falls facility.

There is a clear need for this regional facility. This isn't a partisan issue. Law enforcement across the political spectrum that I've talked to all say that getting this done is one of their highest priorities. Democrats have had similar proposals. With such wide support, I simply cannot understand why the Governor and my Democratic colleagues are choosing to stonewall efforts for this facility.



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A few months ago I was told by a constituent that I spend an awful lot of time writing and talking about this topic. He's correct. I discuss this often because the law enforcement in my district discuss it often. I will continue to fight for this facility because we need it and because northwest Wisconsin, not just Madison and Milwaukee, deserves access to mental health resources.