



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Representative Ohnstad Statement on 2021-23 Budget**

MADISON – This evening Governor Tony Evers formally provided his 2021-23 budget proposal following his televised budget address. This biennial address outlines and highlights key programs and provisions included in the legislation and accompanies the introduction of the state's spending bill every other year. In the interest of safety during the pandemic, this year the address was delivered virtually online. Representative Tod Ohnstad (D-Kenosha) offered the following statement:

"Tonight Governor Evers spoke to the important concerns that are on the minds of the people of Wisconsin. Our state, like every state across our nation, faces tremendous challenges related to the pandemic as we respond and recover from the dual health and economic impacts. Governor Evers has offered a bold plan to get the state back on track.

A major cornerstone of the budget proposal is investment in the economic recovery for small businesses and access to resources for entrepreneurs. Obviously, given the current pandemic, the bill has many aspects that will advance the state's healthcare systems and response. However, the document takes a much more comprehensive approach to essential health issues, including substantial funding for mental health, which can help take on the opioid crisis and other substance abuse disorders. It includes important reforms to lower prescription drug prices and control costs. It would also finally accept federal funds to expand BadgerCare coverage, which not only would increase the ability for Wisconsinites to access healthcare, but would also bring millions of federal dollars to the state.

This budget looks to the future. Nothing is more fundamental to the future success of our state than the education of our next generation. Evers' budget supports our children and our families by ensuring the state pays its full share for their education. It also provides the framework for success by ensuring both the current generation and the next won't have to operate on crumbling roads and infrastructure, and that we will have access to the broadband internet needed for a global economy.

Criminal justice reform is also an important aspect of this plan, as we can reduce the substantial cost burden of incarceration through proven common sense treatment and diversion approaches. A facet of this is marijuana legalization, an issue I have worked on throughout my time in office. We should join the many other states who have ended this unnecessary prohibition. It will reduce criminal justice costs, create jobs, generate revenue for community reinvestment and school funding, and provide non-pharmaceutical relief for those dealing with chronic pain and illness.

Some may say we must hold off on addressing the state's many long-standing issues at this time, but I look forward to working with Governor Evers to prove that we can both walk and chew gum, and we can take on the concerns of Wisconsin families. The problems we had a year ago did not go away because of more recent problems. The solutions, investments, and reforms offered by Governor Evers will serve as the blueprint for our bounce back."

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