



State Senator Sheila Harsdorf

Date: March 9, 2017

To: Senate Committee on Revenue, Financial Institutions and Rural Issues

From: State Senator Sheila Harsdorf

RE: Special Session Senate Bill 8

Dear Chair Marklein and Committee Members:

Thank you for holding a public hearing on Special Session Senate Bill 8 which provides funding for additional opioid treatment programs.

As you know, we began attacking heroin and opioid abuse in the 2013-14 legislative session under the leadership of Representative Nygren. With input from law enforcement, first responders, medical professionals, and others, legislation known as the H.O.P.E. Agenda was developed. In 2015, and now in 2017, we continue to build on the H.O.P.E. Agenda as needed changes are brought to our attention.

2013 Wisconsin Act 195 directed the Department of Health Services (DHS) to create two or three regional comprehensive opioid treatment programs. Under this direction, DHS has contracted with three providers in Northeast, Northcentral, and Northwest Wisconsin. Even with these facilities, rural areas continue to have shortages of drug treatment. Where facilities do exist, travelling long distances for services cause hardship for individuals in need of treatment and as a result they may not seek out necessary treatment.

Special Session Senate Bill 8 proposes \$2 million for this biennia to provide additional treatment opportunities for high need, underserved areas of the state.

I urge your support and prompt action on this legislation. Thank you! I would welcome the opportunity to answer questions.



John Nygren

WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ 89TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Finance

Senate Committee on Revenue, Financial Institutions and Rural Issues
Chair, Senator Howard Marklein
Testimony by Representative John Nygren
March 9, 2017

Thank you Chair Marklein and members of the Committee on Revenue, Financial Institutions and Rural Issues for holding a public hearing on Special Session Senate Bill 8, regarding creating additional opioid treatment programs and making an appropriation.

For the past two sessions, we have worked together as legislative colleagues to pass a package of 17 bills aimed at combating our state's opioid and heroin epidemic. We call this package the Heroin, Opioid Prevention and Education – or HOPE – Agenda. With unanimous bipartisan support and Governor Walker's signature, we successfully laid a foundation to combat heroin and opioid addiction in Wisconsin. That said, there is still more work to be done.

This session, I was appointed Co-Chair of the Governor's Task Force on Opioid Abuse with Lt. Governor Kleefisch. Following three task force meetings throughout the state, involving testimony from dozens of citizens, advocates, and stakeholders, the Lt. Governor and I released a report of recommendations to Governor Walker. The governor took immediate action and called for a Special Session on Opioid Abuse.

2013 Wisconsin Act 195 created three new treatment programs in rural, underserved areas of our state. I had the opportunity to visit the Libertas facility in Marinette a few months ago, and the staff informed me that they're serving a significantly higher number of people than they had originally projected. It's clear that there is a need for more treatment opportunities, including residential and outpatient services.

2017 Special Session Senate Bill 8 will further expand treatment opportunities to high need Wisconsin communities by allocating funding for up to 3 new treatment facilities. These facilities will be placed in underserved areas, as defined by the Department of Health Services, and will serve populations around the state that don't currently have access to treatment services.

The heroin and opioid epidemic has hit every corner of Wisconsin; no demographic is immune from the dangers of addiction. It's vital that we continue our efforts to provide resources throughout the state, especially those that remain underserved. This bill provides funding for additional opioid treatment programs in high-need areas. These programs will ensure that individuals suffering from addiction in underserved areas have increased access to treatment opportunities and are able to succeed in recovery.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony to your committee on these important pieces of legislation. Please don't hesitate to contact my office with any questions or concerns.

Rep. John Nygren
Assembly District 89