



John Nygren

WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ 89TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Finance

Assembly Committee on Education
Chair, Representative Jeremy Thiesfeldt
Testimony by Representative John Nygren

March 2, 2017

Thank you Chair Thiesfeldt and members of the Committee on Education for holding a public hearing on Special Session Assembly Bills 6 and 11.

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. From the work of this task force, 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.

The following bills are part of Governor Walker's Special Session call to fight opioid abuse and addiction in Wisconsin:

2017 Special Session Assembly Bill 6

When a high school aged student who struggles with addiction completes a treatment program, it's often difficult for them to stay sober when they go back to their residential school. Falling back into an old routine with the same friend groups is often unavoidable; unfortunately, relapses are all too common. This bill creates a recovery high school where students can continue their education during or after attending a treatment program, effectively heightening the success rate for long-term recovery.

This recovery high school provides added supports for students who struggle with addiction, such as counseling and therapy services, and is a safe space where they can continue to focus on recovery while working toward a high school diploma.

Many other states have successful recovery schools, and evidence shows that attending a recovery high school instead of going back to a residential high school immediately following treatment can set a student in recovery up for a substance-free future.



John Nygren

WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ 89TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Finance

2017 Special Session Assembly Bill 11

This legislation will increase the appropriation for a program called Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) by \$100,000 annually. This program is an evidence-based strategy used in schools to address issues of drug use, abuse, and addiction in children and adolescents.

Many times, a student may feel pressured by his or her peers to try substances that may be dangerous to their health and safety. When these situations arise, many kids don't feel comfortable going to a parent or teacher for help. SBIRT helps connect students with trusted adults who are trained to counsel students to maneuver through potentially tough situations regarding drugs and/or alcohol. It is a proven model that ultimately reduces instances of drug use, abuse, and addiction in school-aged kids.

Governor Walker prioritized SBIRT in his budget recommendations and, after the release of this bill, proposed funding the program at \$200,000 annually. It is for this reason that a motion has been drafted to increase funding for this bill to match the governor's budget recommendation.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify before your committee today on these important pieces of legislation and welcome any questions you may have at this time.

Alberta Darling

Wisconsin State Senator

Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Finance

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
2017 Special Session Assembly Bill 6
March 2, 2017

Thank you Chairman Thiesfeldt and committee members for holding a public hearing today on 2017 Special Session Assembly Bill 6. This bill is one of the legislative recommendations that came from the Co-chairs of the Governor's Task Force on Opioid Abuse, Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch and Representative John Nygren. I am proud to co-author Special Session Assembly Bill 6 with Representative Nygren because students and families across Wisconsin need help in their journey towards drug recovery.

This bill empowers the director of the Office of Educational Opportunity (OEO) at the University of Wisconsin System to authorize the operation of a recovery school aimed at helping high school students who are currently recovering from substance use disorder or dependency.

Kids are not immune to the many misfortunes of being addicted to drugs. Sadly, youth are often overlooked when we talk about combating the heroin epidemic here in the state of Wisconsin. Unfortunately, too many people in Wisconsin know someone who is directly impacted by our drug abuse crisis. I believe this bill will be an effective way to help kids fully recover from their addiction before it is too late.

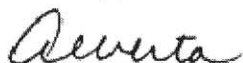
We see kids struggling with addiction successfully complete treatment programs but soon relapse once they return to their previous school. Many times, this is due to the fact that they fall into similar routines that led to their drug addiction. Exposure to toxic environments do not give students enough time to fully recover from their addiction.

This recovery high school provides added supports for students who struggle with addiction, such as counseling and therapy services while creating a safe space where they can continue to focus on recovery and work toward a high school diploma. Evidence shows that attending a recovery high school instead of going back to a residential high school immediately following treatment can set a student in recovery up for a substance-free future.

I applaud the UW System for being an active partner in the fight against our state's drug abuse crisis. Many other states have seen the success of recovery schools, such as Indiana, Massachusetts, and Minnesota. If we can leverage the UW System's expertise, these students are much more likely to succeed. I am particularly proud that OEO will report not only students' academic outcomes but their health outcomes as well.

Thank you committee members for allowing me to provide testimony on 2017 Special Session Assembly Bill 6. It is my hope to have your support on this bill.

Sincerely,



Alberta Darling

Assembly Committee on Education
March 1, 2017

**Department of Public Instruction Testimony for Information Only
Special Session Assembly Bill 6**

I want to thank Chairman Thiesfeldt and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify today on Special Session Assembly Bill 6 (SS AB 6). My name is Jeff Pertl, Senior Policy Advisor for the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). I will provide some background on the bill and be happy to answer the Committee's questions to the best of my ability. Rep. Nygren's office is working on an amendment to address some technical concerns.

Bill Analysis

Origin: This bill is one of the legislative recommendations from Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch and State Rep. John Nygren, Co-Chairs of the Governor's Task Force on Opioid Abuse, and is included in Governor Walker's call for a Special Session on Opioid Abuse.

Scope: This bill authorizes the director of the Office of Educational Opportunity (OEO) in the University of Wisconsin System to contract with a person to operate, as a four-year pilot project, one recovery charter school for no more than 15 high school pupils in recovery from substance use disorder or dependency.

Under the bill, the operator must provide an academic curriculum that satisfies the requirement for graduation from high school as well as therapeutic programming and support. Pupils who wish to attend the recovery charter school must meet the following:

- 1) that the pupil has begun treatment in a substance use disorder or dependency program;
- 2) that the pupil has maintained sobriety for at least 30 days prior to attending the charter school; and
- 3) that the pupil will submit to a drug screening assessment and, if appropriate, a drug test prior to being admitted.

The operator of the charter school may not admit a pupil who tests positive for drugs, and pupils must receive counseling from substance use disorder or dependency counselors. From our discussions with the bill authors and Gary Bennett, the needs of students who might relapse while enrolled will be addressed individually.

Funding: Unlike other independent charter schools, students under this bill will be funded from a separate state appropriation. There will be no fiscal impact on other schools. A \$50,000 start-up grant is available if matching funds are secured.

Medical Coverage: The contract between the operator of the recovery charter school and OEO must contain a requirement that, as a condition of continuing enrollment, an applicant for enrollment in the recovery charter school submit claims for coverage of certain services provided by the recovery charter school to his or her health care plan for which the applicant is covered for mental health services. The bill also requires the director of OEO to, following the fourth year of the operation of the charter school, submit a written report to the Department of Health Services (DHS) regarding the operation and effectiveness of the charter school.

The bill prohibits a health care policy, plan, or contract from excluding coverage for mental health or behavioral health treatment or services provided by the recovery charter school if the policy, plan, or contract covers mental health or behavior health treatment or services when provided by another health care provider.

A Companion to At-Risk Programs: Wisconsin law requires school districts to identify students at-risk and provide an individual plan to meet their needs. However, "at-risk" is narrowly defined in statute and does not include alcohol or other drug (AODA) issues.

Children at risk of not graduating from high school are defined, under §118.153 (1) as pupils in grades 5 to 12 who are at risk of not graduating from high school because they are dropouts, or are two or more of the following:

- one or more years behind their age group in the number of credits attained;
- two or more years behind their age group in basic skill levels;
- habitual truants;
- parents;
- adjudicated delinquents; and
- 8th grade pupils whose score below the basic level on the state assessment or who failed to be promoted to the 9th grade.

The Wisconsin Challenge Academy and Milwaukee Public Schools Partnership Schools serve students at-risk of dropping out or who are struggling in traditional school settings.

While at-risk programs focus on graduating students most likely to drop out in a traditional school environment, the proposed Recovery Charter could serve as a bridge program, helping student transition from residential or intensive AODA treatment back to a structured school setting. This bridge setting would allow students to re-establish their academic footing in a specialized environment and help family assess the best school environment for their student.

We are eager to see the outcomes of this pilot approach. I would be happy to answer any question the Committee might have.

OEO asks for your support of Special Session AB6

(Written Testimony from Gary A. Bennett from March 2, 2017)

Thank you Chariman Thiesfeldt, Vice-Chair Kitchens, ranking member Rep. Pope and all members of the committee for providing me an opportunity to talk about Special Session AB6. Also, thank you to every committee member for taking time to talk with me about AB6 in your office prior to today's hearing. Whether I met with you directly or your staff, I appreciate the chance to start our discussion prior to today's hearing.

While not on the committee, I want to thank Rep. John Nygren for his continued leadership in addressing Wisconsin's drug addiction crisis. My family has been directly impacted by the demons of drug abuse and addiction, so I deeply appreciate the time and energy Rep. Nygren and his staff continue to commit towards this important issue.

I would be remiss if I did not also thank AB6's lead Senate author, a fellow former teacher, Senator Alberta Darling for her support of the bill, and continued leadership.

As an overview, AB6 would provide me with an opportunity to authorize a recovery high school for students who are diagnosed with drug abuse and addiction.

I am proud to say this proposal is exactly what OEO was established to do. OEO exists to be a partner to students, families, and communities who want an educational opportunity that is otherwise unavailable.

If enacted into law, OEO will incubate a model substance abuse recovery high school. To be effective, the school will be created in direct coordination with local partners, for instance, traditional school districts and county health departments.

If the school is successful, I then will spin it off from my portfolio to be directly operated, managed, and supported by local level partners. OEO and UWSA partners would then be able to provide technical assistance to parties who want to replicate the practices we found effective within their own local contexts.

In order to be able to do so, I ask for your support of AB6 to empower my office to be a proactive partner in the fight against Wisconsin's substance abuse and addiction crisis.

Krause, Caroline

From: Anne Sanchez <anne@madisontruckequipment.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 02, 2017 8:32 AM
To: Krause, Caroline: cmmiller5@wisc.edu
Subject: Recovery Schools are important!
Attachments: Why are Recovery Schools important.pdf

Hi Caroline and Carrie,
I have attached a document with a little bit about my story. It was written quickly, sorry about grammar.
If you want to go through and pull out some points to use that would be fine.

I hope I got this to you in time!
Let me know how it goes please.

Thanks,

Anne Sanchez
Equipment Specialist

Madison Truck Equipment, Inc.
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Madison, WI 53716
608-222-5591
608-222-3644 Fax
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Why are Recovery Schools important?

My name is Anne Sanchez, I graduated from Horizon high school, Dane County's only Recovery school. I figured I would just share with you some of my experience.

I struggled with school from middle school into freshman year. I was addicted to drugs and alcohol and the only reason I ever attended high school at Monona Grove was to meet up with my friends.

Sophomore year things got really rough. I was running away from home often, getting in trouble with police, and going to school rarely.

Monona Grove did not really know what to do with me, so they sent me to the alternative school.

The teachers there were really good to me, but the problem I had was with the students. Almost all of them were into heavier drugs.

This is when I started experimenting with cocaine, ecstasy, ketamine, and then on to my drug of choice, opiates.

Shortly after I started using oxy's, I switched to heroin. I, again, stopped going to school. I was running away from home. This time I stayed gone for a few weeks.

The schools, and my parents were very concerned at this point that I was going to die.

After I had spent all my money and was looking at having to steal to continue using I finally came home and was willing to get help. I knew I needed it.

My parents were glad to see me, but they were still so scared. They sent me to connections counseling, where I attended groups and met with Shelly Dutch. My parents heard about Horizon High School through Connections.

With help from the recovery community I was able to attend. When I was going it was expensive to attend school there, but I was given grants from the Recovery Foundation to be there.

Horizon High School was a God send for me.

I was committed to being sober, because I knew I had to be. I did relapse a few times while I was there. But Traci, the director of Horizon, and Ketrick, the teacher, they believed in me. They believed I could get better. They do beautiful work there. I came in a lost little girl, and after attending for a couple of years and graduating I left a stronger woman with one year of continuous sobriety.

It was so important for my recovery to be attending a sober high school. There is no way I would have been able to stay sober for any length of time without them. If you put a teenager in a community full of kids using, it is just very rare that they could succeed in staying sober.

Horizon was the last option that anyone could think of to help me.

I believe that the school saved my life.

Traci, Ketrick, and the other students working on their sobriety at Horizon High School, SAVED MY LIFE.

I am not the only one who was saved by Horizon, and with better funding there could be so many more.

Testimony of Carter Kofman
IN SUPPORT OF SSAB-6, THE RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOL BILL
Before the Assembly Education Committee
March 2, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my support for SSAB-6 relating to recovery high schools. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share my thoughts with you today.

My name is Carter Kofman and I am a young person in long-term recovery, which for me means I have not used drugs or alcohol since September 5th, 2014. As a college student myself, I understand the unique challenges and opportunities that come with entering recovery at a young age and the immense difficulty of returning to a community which was the main stage for using.

While my experiences do not include entering recovery in high school, I do strongly believe in the power of connection in recovery, the power of young people who no longer use drugs or alcohol studying together, eating lunch together, sharing their hope together, sharing their struggles together. Just as in college, high school is a time of personal and social, physical and emotional, development, a time during which lasting thought patterns and behaviors can be learned. Moreover, recovery brings with it similar opportunities for holistic development.

For this reason, the development of recovery high schools is crucial to the continued recovery of high school students who otherwise would be forced to return to their old environments, potentially switch schools, or end their high school careers. It is through peer-support, similar experiences, and continuous daily support that young people in recovery can thrive, through recovery high schools that high school students can better grow in recovery.

A state where recovery high schools exist as the norm, rather than the exception, is a state I want to live in. The state of Wisconsin has the opportunity to make this a reality, to join the youth recovery revolution.

Thank you for your time.

Carter Kofman
850 East Gorham Street
Madison, WI 53703 (847) 987-9046

47 Harvest Way

Fitchburg, WI 53711

February 27, 2017

Representative John Nygren

89th Assembly District

309 East State Capitol

Madison, WI 53703

Dear Representative John Nygren:

I am responding to your Recovery High School bill.

My name is Nancy Meyer. My son, Charles John Norwell, died on May 18, 2013 of a prescription opiate overdose. As a family, we lived with opiate addiction for over 14 years. CJ's issue started while he was in high school at Memorial High School in Madison, WI. He was in a serious auto accident while on lunch break as was prescribed opiates for back pain. I firmly believe that if we would have done a better job of dealing with CJ's issues in high school, we would have had a better outcome.

I am a retired Educator from Madison Area Technical College. I am currently a volunteer board member at Horizon High School, Wisconsin's only Recovery High School. I strongly support your bill for Recovery High Schools. I am very supportive of state supported Recovery High Schools with the following comments:

1. There is a strong need in Wisconsin for expanded services for youth who suffer from substance mis-use issues. Additional Recovery High Schools are needed.
2. The school needs to remain small, at maximum only 15 students in order to provide the counseling, team building and family atmosphere that is needed for student success.
3. Past efforts with Recovery High Schools in Wisconsin (Janesville and Waukesha) failed due to the lack of understanding of the nature of recovery high schools and of the funding that is needed. At Horizon High School, we are lucky to have a board member

who is the Owner of Connections Counseling. Therefore, she is knowledgeable in the treatment and counseling that is required and this can be individualized for our students as needed.

4. The student population in recovery high schools can fluctuate due to treatment programs and sometimes if jailed, etc. We hold a "seat" for a student that is away at treatment until they can return back to school. This has to be the case with your new school for student success.
5. Massachusetts was voted the best state in the US. They emphasize education and health care with a major emphasis on mental health and addiction. They have a state agency in the Department of Public Health called the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services. We need that in Wisconsin! Please see the Massachusetts website for information and resources. They have 5 recovery schools in Massachusetts which are partially funded with state funds.

I congratulate you on your work for our Wisconsin youth with substance mis-use issues. I hope that the state will support additional funding for existing Recovery High Schools so that Horizon High School can function without the fear of closing each academic year.

Sincerely,

Nancy J. Meyer

Nancy J. Meyer

2765 Raritan Road
Fitchburg, WI 53711

March 2, 2017

Re Special Assembly Bill 6

To Wisconsin State Legislature:

We would like to add our voices to support for efforts in Wisconsin to increase the availability of recovery high school to young people trying to stay clean and sober. We, with 4 others, founded Horizon High School 12 years ago. We were frustrated that, after sending our son out-of-state to a 28-day in-patient recovery program (paid with a second mortgage), when he came back home, he fell in with the same crowd back in his Madison high school, and he quickly resumed his using and self-destructive behavior. After going thru several counselors, we found Shelly Dutch of Connections Counseling, who told us about "recovery high schools" -- but that there was not one in Madison (nor anywhere in Wisconsin). So 6 of us starting calling as many of the recovery schools in other states (at that time we had a list of 12-15 to call) to learn how they started and operated. We incorporated December 2004 as a Wisconsin non-stock, non-profit corporation, with 501(c)(3) status from the IRS. Then with a \$10000 donation, we started Horizon High School in January 2005, with 6 students and a teacher and counselor.

Horizon High School was funded by donations and tuition (\$5000/semester). We had to raise the tuition to \$6000 a couple of years later as well as have 3 fundraising efforts every year, as we found we need to increase staff. We have had funding crises every few years and have almost closed our doors several times, but the community pulled through with donations. Five or six years ago, MMSD began to provide some steady funding (a fraction of what we needed) and some other nearby school districts sent us students and provided some funding for them.

One thing we have learned is that we must continue over the summer, with a form of summer school, to allow the gains the students make in their recovery paths, made during the school year, not to be sabotaged over the summer. However, no school district has ever provided any funds for this. All funding must come from donations.

Horizon has helped over a hundred students over the past 12 years, but it has been a constant struggle to find the funds to continue. Our yearly budget is around \$215,000.

So to you, the Wisconsin legislature, in your consideration of legislation to create a recovery high school, there are some things we would like to contribute to the discussion.

1. It will cost at least and probably more than \$20,000 per student, much more than the per-student money the state allocates for each student. This is due to the need to have a much smaller student to staff ratio, so that each student gets individualized support. Also, it is clear that the students we work with, almost universally, are "dual diagnosed", that is, the have mental

health/behaviorial issues as well as the drug/alcohol issues. This is part of the reason why there needs to be such a low student to staff ratio.

2. For a recovery school to succeed it must have a reliable funding base and not be funded on a "number of seats filled the 3rd Friday of September" or some other standard formula. Students relapse and are barred from the school until they have proven they are sober and committed to their recovery. Thus, populations can fluctuate dramatically (we've seen one person drag down many others with them).

3. During Horizon's existence, there were two other recovery schools which started in Wisconsin, as charter schools, one in Janesville and the other in Waukesha. They both, unfortunately, are no longer functioning – because there never was adequate funding and/or funding was totally cut, and the hosting school districts did not understand what a recovery high school is – not a place to park disruptive students who used drugs. You should contact the two people who created and ran these schools to learn their lessons so the same failures do not occur again.

4. Despite the critical role Horizon has played in saving many students' lives, it has been impossible to have health insurance providers consider covering the costs of counselors which we provide. Any legislation needs to make clear that recovery schools are legitimate candidates for insurance provider funding.

5. We think that the funding providing by chartering (as demonstrated by the history of the Janesville and Waukesha charter recovery schools) is nowhere sufficient for the creation of a new charter recovery school in Wisconsin. Instead, the experience of Massachusetts should be considered where there is a line item in the state budget for recovery schools, with adequate funding to allow the schools to be sustainable and succeed.

Thank you.

John Fournelle and Judi Munaker
jhfour@gmail.com munaker@charter.net

March 1, 2017

The Honorable John Nygren
Wisconsin State Representative
127 W State Capitol, Madison, WI 53702

Dear Representative Nygren,

My name is Hadeel Hasan and I am a Therapist and Program Manager with Connections Counseling, LLC. I am also the Victim Services-Juvenile Focused Social Worker at Project Respect, a Dane County-based social service agency that works with victims of Human Trafficking. Finally, I also serve on the Advisory Council for WI Voices for Recovery.

I urge for your support of recovery high schools in Wisconsin which will assist kids suffering from substance use disorders/dependence and mental health disorders. I ask for your support because research shows that “in addition to peer pressure, difficulty coping with negative feelings and interpersonal conflict can endanger a teen’s newly-established sobriety. Research paints a picture of adolescent recidivism that includes:

- a lack of involvement in productive activities;
- a return to the environment of previous use;
- a failure to establish social contact with nonusers;
- a lack of family involvement;
- less likelihood of Twelve Step meeting attendance or leisure activities without drugs; and
- increased likelihood of engaging in activities with pretreatment friends.” (Moberg et al., 2009).

Recovery High Schools will be beneficial to the development of a child suffering from a substance use disorder because it can take a more individualized and holistic approach in addressing a child’s need. Recovery High Schools can provide the following:

- “offer sufficient intensity and duration of contact;
- target multiple life-health domains (e.g., educational, emotional, physical health, vocational, legal, psychiatric);
- be sensitive to the cultural and socioeconomic realities of the client;
- encourage family involvement;
- increase prosocial leisure habits;
- encourage compliance with a wide range of social services to provide additional support;
- focus on relapse prevention; and
- provide cognitive behavior and problem solving skill training to help reduce cravings and to cope with anger, depression and anxiety” (Moberg et al., 2009).

These are all key components to addressing the needs of kids suffering with this disease. Currently, I am facilitating a group for the Horizon High School students focused on substance use, and skill building. This therapeutic setting would not be provided in a traditional High School. These students thrive off the setting in their High School as well as the therapy provided in group. During group, they can discuss situations that are occurring on a daily and impacting them negatively. With this, they can process, reflect, and receive feedback to help them move forward. I hope you can see the need for this system in our state.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at hadeel.hasan@connectionsounseling.com.

Thank you,

Hadeel Hasan, CAPSW, SAC-IT

Testimony to Assembly Committee on Education Regarding Assembly Bill 6

March 2, 2017

Submitted by D. Paul Moberg (dpmoberg@wisc.edu)

I am pleased to have this opportunity to provide testimony regarding Assembly Bill 6 which would establish a charter Recovery High School (RHS) in Wisconsin. My name is Paul Moberg, and I am a research professor and senior scientist in the Department of Population Health Sciences and the Population Health Institute at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. I have been conducting program evaluation and outcomes research on Recovery High Schools since the 1990's. In addition, in my community service role, I am a board member for Wisconsin's only existing recovery school, Horizon High School in Madison. Horizon is an independent private non-profit school, funded by donations, tuition payments and school district purchase of services.

I am speaking primarily in my research role today. I have studied a number of recovery schools around the country and want to briefly share some of my findings and observations with the committee. I am hoping that **my testimony will provide support for the overall concept of a recovery school as proposed, but will also help to inform some of the details** of your proposed legislation.

First, I would like to reiterate that **the bill as currently drafted captures many of the elements which are nationally recognized (for example by the Association of Recovery Schools) as key components and best practices for a RHS.** The RHS model has developed due to the high rate of relapse experienced by young people who return to (or in the case of outpatient treatment never leave) traditional schools after treatment for SUDs. RHSs include an emphasis on post-treatment support in an educational setting for young people who have already participated in treatment and have maintained abstinence for at least 30 days, inclusion of credentialed substance use disorder counselors/therapists on staff, and provision of regular and ongoing therapeutic support in what is a first and foremost a school setting. Generally, RHSs are in their own independent spaces, or if a program is within another school setting they use physical and/or

scheduling barriers to separate the students from the general population. Most RHSs are small, enroll students from multiple school districts, and provide educational programming tailored to individual student needs. Drug screening and a strong positive peer environment keep students accountable and supports their abstinence. In many cases the schools may partner with local treatment programs for additional services: for example, Horizon High School here in Madison works closely and very successfully with Connections Counseling.

My program evaluations and a current multi-site quasi-experimental research study funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse have shown **very impressive results in terms of supporting young people in maintaining abstinence and reduced substance use levels, obtaining better grades in school, and supporting them in accessing ongoing needed outside specialty treatment** for both substance use disorders and mental health concerns. Thus I am comfortable testifying that these programs are effective for students who have the benefit of enrolling in a RHS. I agree that we need additional Recovery Schools in Wisconsin and support this legislation as a step in that direction.

I have also found that these schools are **very difficult to finance and sustain** over time. They cost two to three times what a traditional high school spends on a per pupil basis. This is due to the small enrollments, the need for specialty therapeutic and counseling staff as well as teachers and program directors/principals, uneven and fluctuating enrollment over the course of a school year, and frequent crisis counseling needs of students. When incorporated within school districts, these programs are easy to cut due to their expense and the small number of students served without a strong constituent base.

I have advocated for a number of years for **braided funding** for RHSs. By this I mean **funding from multiple public sector domains, not just the educational system**. Students in RHSs all have educational needs and are entitled to an appropriate education; however, they also have needs for services in the health sector to address their substance use disorders and their mental health needs (60-90% of the students have a diagnosed or diagnosable mental health need); services from the juvenile justice system (20-40% have justice system

involvement); and often other social service needs such as family, child and protective service issues. Many students have individual education plans (IEPs) which warrant additional funding beyond the mean per pupil allocation. (Horizon HS, has begun to participate as a provider in the Comprehensive Community Support program, but the reimbursements to date have been relatively minor.) I laud the intent of Assembly Bill 6 to assure that health insurance carriers can be billed for therapeutic counseling services. However, as I'm sure others will point out, there will be immense administrative difficulties in implementing this in a school setting. A basic problem is that insurance funding on a fee for service basis provides **uncertain and administrative burdensome piecework funding** to what is a fixed staffing commitment in a setting with little administrative support.

I have an additional concern with the business plan in AB 6 as currently drafted. The only fixed funding (beyond a small start-up allocation) specified is the per pupil amount for a charter school student. With 15 students, this amounts to only about \$120,000 per year. In addition, enrollment numbers are likely to vary over the course of a school year, so **this would not necessarily be a sum-certain amount, even though the staffing and facilities would need to be constant.** (As an alternative, in Massachusetts five RHSs have been funded with sum certain state allocations, rather than diverting funds from school districts on a per pupil basis and adding insurance payments as in the AB 6 approach.)

In summary:

1. We have increasingly strong evidence that Recovery High Schools are effective in supporting student abstinence and recovery from substance use disorders, and I support the program design as outlined in AB 6--it is consistent with best practice;
2. Sum certain funding well beyond that provided by the per pupil charter allocation is necessary for viability of a recovery school; and
3. Braided funding across sectors is an appropriate approach if it can be accomplished in a sum certain rather than piecework fashion.

Thank you!

2765 Raritan Road
Fitchburg, WI 53711

March 2, 2017

Re Special Assembly Bill 6

To Wisconsin State Legislature:

We would like to add our voices to support for efforts in Wisconsin to increase the availability of recovery high school to young people trying to stay clean and sober. We, with 4 others, founded Horizon High School 12 years ago. We were frustrated that, after sending our son out-of-state to a 28-day in-patient recovery program (paid with a second mortgage), when he came back home, he fell in with the same crowd back in his Madison high school, and he quickly resumed his using and self-destructive behavior. After going thru several counselors, we found Shelly Dutch of Connections Counseling, who told us about "recovery high schools" -- but that there was not one in Madison (nor anywhere in Wisconsin). So 6 of us starting calling as many of the recovery schools in other states (at that time we had a list of 12-15 to call) to learn how they started and operated. We incorporated December 2004 as a Wisconsin non-stock, non-profit corporation, with 501(c)(3) status from the IRS. Then with a \$10000 donation, we started Horizon High School in January 2005, with 6 students and a teacher and counselor.

Horizon High School was funded by donations and tuition (\$5000/semester). We had to raise the tuition to \$6000 a couple of years later as well as have 3 fundraising efforts every year, as we found we need to increase staff. We have had funding crises every few years and have almost closed our doors several times, but the community pulled through with donations. Five or six years ago, MMSD began to provide some steady funding (a fraction of what we needed) and some other nearby school districts sent us students and provided some funding for them.

One thing we have learned is that we must continue over the summer, with a form of summer school, to allow the gains the students make in their recovery paths, made during the school year, not to be sabotaged over the summer. However, no school district has ever provided any funds for this. All funding must come from donations.

Horizon has helped over a hundred students over the past 12 years, but it has been a constant struggle to find the funds to continue. Our yearly budget is around \$215,000.

So to you, the Wisconsin legislature, in your consideration of legislation to create a recovery high school, there are some things we would like to contribute to the discussion.

1. It will cost at least and probably more than \$20,000 per student, much more than the per-student money the state allocates for each student. This is due to the need to have a much smaller student to staff ratio, so that each student gets individualized support. Also, it is clear that the students we work with, almost universally, are "dual diagnosed", that is, the have mental

health/behaviorial issues as well as the drug/alcohol issues. This is part of the reason why there needs to be such a low student to staff ratio.

2. For a recovery school to succeed it must have a reliable funding base and not be funded on a "number of seats filled the 3rd Friday of September" or some other standard formula. Students relapse and are barred from the school until they have proven they are sober and committed to their recovery. Thus, populations can fluctuate dramatically (we've seen one person drag down many others with them).

3. During Horizon's existence, there were two other recovery schools which started in Wisconsin, as charter schools, one in Janesville and the other in Waukesha. They both, unfortunately, are no longer functioning – because there never was adequate funding and/or funding was totally cut, and the hosting school districts did not understand what a recovery high school is – not a place to park disruptive students who used drugs. You should contact the two people who created and ran these schools to learn their lessons so the same failures do not occur again.

4. Despite the critical role Horizon has played in saving many students' lives, it has been impossible to have health insurance providers consider covering the costs of counselors which we provide. Any legislation needs to make clear that recovery schools are legitimate candidates for insurance provider funding.

5. We think that the funding providing by chartering (as demonstrated by the history of the Janesville and Waukesha charter recovery schools) is nowhere sufficient for the creation of a new charter recovery school in Wisconsin. Instead, the experience of Massachusetts should be considered where there is a line item in the state budget for recovery schools, with adequate funding to allow the schools to be sustainable and succeed.

Thank you.

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