



Luther S. Olsen

State Senator
14th District

TO: Senate Committee on Education
FROM: Senator Luther Olsen
DATE: Wednesday, March 11, 2020
SUBJECT: Testimony for Senate Bill 506/Assembly Bill 529

Thank you members of the Senate Committee on Education for holding a hearing and allowing me to testify in support of both Senate Bill 506 (SB 506) and Assembly Bill 529 (AB 529).

This bill was drafted as part of the package of bills that came out of the Speaker's Task Force on Suicide Prevention. The task force was created earlier this session and held six public hearings throughout the state, it was charged with evaluating the current resources available for suicide prevention as well as identifying areas that could be improved upon.

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and our local Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs) established the Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools (WISH) Center. The Center provides training and assistance to public schools to implement programs that focus on the prevention and intervention of alcohol, tobacco, and drug abuse, mental health, and promote school safety in order to help create better environments for learning.

This legislation will enhance the WISH Center's ability to provide suicide prevention efforts across the state by giving them the resources necessary to hire additional staff. This bill instructs DPI to award an annual grant to a CESA program in order to support the WISH Center. The funds allocated by this bill must first be used to support the ongoing operations, but if there is any additional funding leftover it may be utilized for other services including training related to general wellness.

Again, thank you members of the Senate Committee on Education for holding a hearing today. I ask for your support on SB 506 and AB 529 and I would be more than happy to answer any questions that you may have.



MICHAEL SCHRAA

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 53RD ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708

Office: (608) 267-7990
Toll-Free: (608) 534-0053
Rep.Schraa@legis.wi.gov

Testimony on SB 506

Thank you, Chairman Olsen and members of the committee, for allowing me to provide testimony on Senate Bill 506, which provides additional funding for the Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools (WISH) Center.

As a member of the Speaker's Task Force on Suicide Prevention, I traveled the State to hear the stories of citizens who have been affected by this tragedy. On June 17, the hearing at Ripon College focused on education. It was impressive to hear what our schools are doing to try to address this public health crisis, but disheartening to hear the struggles our children have with mental health.

That morning, we watched the documentary *Kids in Crisis: You're Not Alone*. Perhaps some of you saw it when it was shown here at the capitol. We met the four youth who were featured, and their stories couldn't help but tug at our heartstrings.

That afternoon, Jackie Schoening from my local CESA 6 testified about the Wisconsin Safe & Healthy Schools Training & Technical Assistance Center. I'm sure the members of this committee are familiar with the WISH program, which helps school districts run programs dealing with alcohol, tobacco and other drug abuse; mental health programs; and programs to promote school safety. With additional staff, the WISH Center could enhance suicide prevention efforts across the state.

Specifically, this bill funds a grant to expand the WISH program. The bill allocated \$70,000 for fiscal 2019-20 and \$200,000 for 2020-21. I believe this is money well spent to facilitate improving the mental health of our students.

Thank you so much for your attention to this issue and for investing in the lives of our most precious resource, the children of Wisconsin.

Senate Committee on Education
March 11, 2020

**Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Testimony in Support of SB 506 and AB 529**

The Department of Public Instruction appreciates the opportunity to provide this written information in support of 2019 Senate Bill 506 (SB 506) and 2019 Assembly Bill 529 (AB 529), which provides grants to the Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools (WISH) Center. The WISH Center is the result of a collaboration between DPI and CESAs. We are pleased that WISH Center representatives will be here today to provide detailed testimony and answer any questions the committee may have about their important work with our schools.

This legislation directs DPI to annually award a grant to a Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) to support the existing collaborative project, known as the WISH Center, to provide training and technical assistance to school districts on prevention and intervention programs for alcohol, tobacco and other drug abuse, mental health programs, and school safety.

This bill was among a number of legislative proposals recommended by the Speaker's Task Force on Suicide Prevention. The Department appreciates the taskforce's work and thanks its Chair and Vice-Chair, Representative Ballweg and Representative Doyle respectively, for their leadership in expanding suicide prevention efforts in our schools and communities.

Background

Prior to 2012, DPI received alcohol and other drug abuse funding from the state to support prevention efforts and staff in every one of the 12 CESA's. When that funding was drastically reduced, DPI looked at ways to continue to provide training and support for prevention efforts across the state resulting in a broader regional approach through the Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools Training and Technical Assistance (WISH) Center. Under the revised structure one director leads the center with four regional coordinators, with each coordinator serving three CESA's. The center continues to serve an increasing number of schools and organizations. The need for services exceeds current resources.

In the 2018-2019 school year, the WISH Center provided training to 1,590 educators from 270 school districts and 72 organizations throughout the state of Wisconsin on a variety of topics ranging from trauma, mental health, and suicide prevention, to school safety. The WISH Center also coordinates the Youth Mental Health First Aid trainings for the state, providing 129 trainings in the last year. It also provides support for the expansion of the Trauma Sensitive Schools Project at reaching 41 schools last year.

Impact

SB 506 and AB 529 would enable the WISH Center to further increase the capacity of Wisconsin

public school districts to respond the demonstrated need we are seeing in Wisconsin Public Schools and documented in the results of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey.¹ Some of those statistics include:

- Nearly 40 percent of respondents self-reported anxiety, 27 percent self-reported depression, and more than 16 percent self-reported self-harm. Certain groups reported extremely high rates of anxiety, including LGBT students, students with physical disabilities and chronic health conditions, students experiencing homelessness, students with low grades, females, and students of color.
- More than 16 percent of respondents have considered suicide, and nearly 8 percent actually attempted suicide.
- Only 28.1 percent of distressed students reported getting the help they needed.
- While alcohol use was at its lowest rate ever at 30.4 percent, over 11 percent of students reported unauthorized use of prescription painkillers.

The department would like to thank Senator Olsen and Representative Schraa for introducing this important legislation and requests your support as passage of this bill will help increase the capacity of Wisconsin public school districts to provide needed prevention and intervention programs for AODA, mental health programs, and school safety.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide information in support of SB 506 and AB 529.

¹ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. “Summary Report. 2017 Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey.” Accessed October 23, 2019. <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sspw/pdf/yrbs-2017-final-summary-report.pdf>

Senate Committee on Education
March 11, 2020

**Wisconsin Safe & Healthy Schools Center
Testimony in Support of 2019 Senate Bill 506**

I am Tracy Herlitzke, Director of the Wisconsin Safe & Healthy Schools Center. I am here to testify today in favor of SB 506.

Background

Prior to 2012, DPI received alcohol and other drug abuse funding from the state to support prevention efforts and staff in every one of the 12 CESAs. CESAs are Cooperative Educational Service Agencies that serve as a link between school districts and the state. They provide training, support to students, and sharing of resources. With the reduction of the AODA funding, DPI decided to take a broader regional approach to provide training through the Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools Training and Technical Assistance (WISH) Center. Under the revised structure, I am the director and we have four regional coordinators, with each coordinator serving three CESAs.

About Us

In the 7 years that I have been the director, the Wisconsin Safe & Healthy Schools Center has experienced growth. We started out in 2012 with 4 part time Regional Coordinators and have grown our funding and work to be full time. This school year we offered 92 trainings. We are expanding our role beyond training to provide ongoing support for implementation.

Accomplishments

Last school year in 2018-2019, 1,590 participants attended our events from 270 schools and 72 organizations. This year we have already surpassed those numbers. I have provided a map of participants by location (below). A diversity of participants attend our trainings, including urban, rural, public, and private schools; several agencies including human services, public health, police departments, higher education, and mental health providers. As much as time allows we provide training in school buildings and districts to reach more educators.

Need for Expansion

Let me describe our need for the funding. If I divide the 421 public school districts in Wisconsin by the existing 4 Regional Coordinators, that is a "caseload" over 100 school district each. Current staff are maxed out with the existing scope of work and travel to provide training. We have delayed trainings due to limited capacity and staff availability.

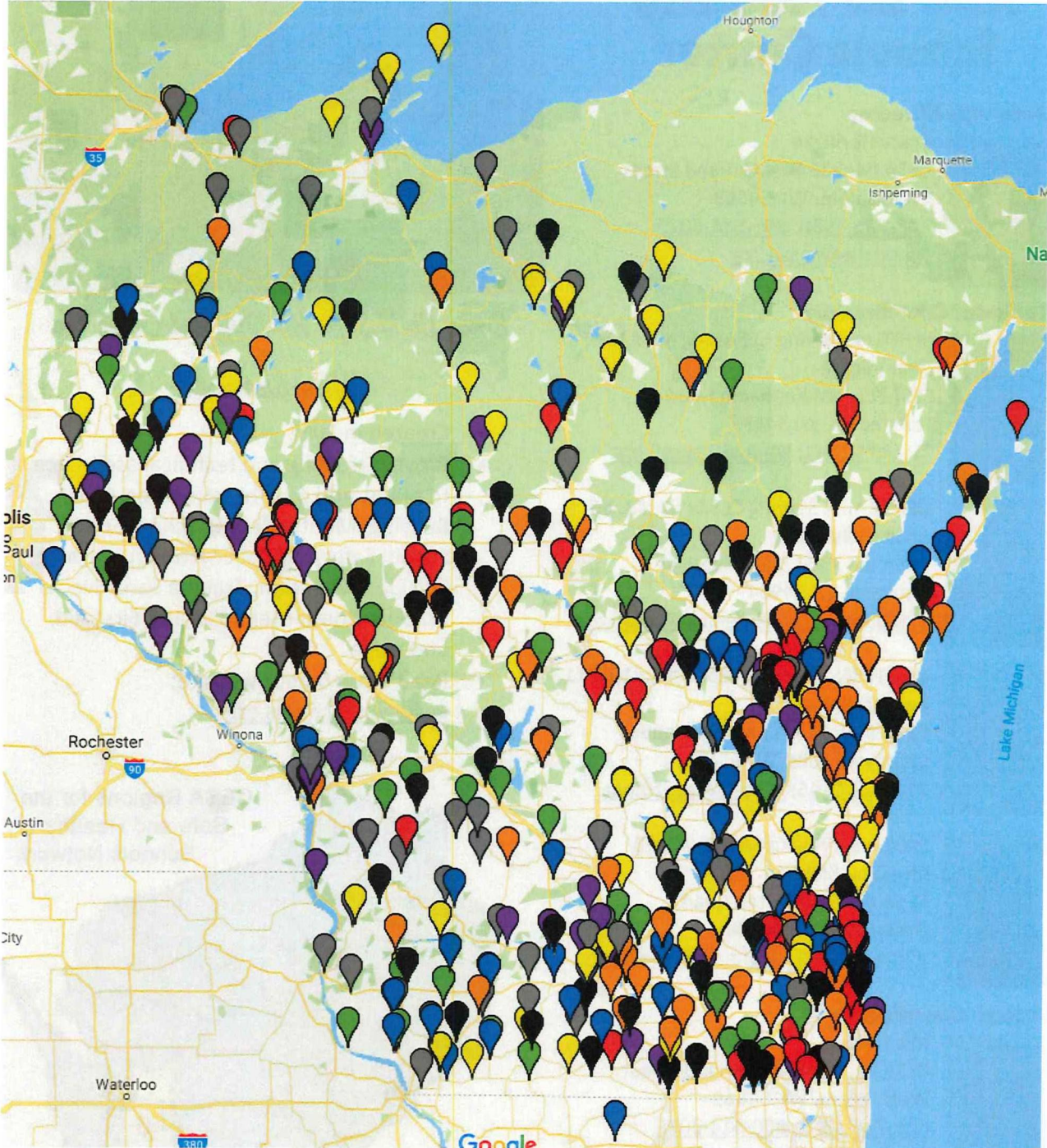
Senate Bill 506 would help us expand our services. We would hire 2 Additional Regional Coordinators to provide more training and services on suicide prevention. This means:









- 40 more trainings for schools and communities on mental health and suicide prevention.
- We could take on additional training such as Sources of Strength, Hope Squad and other peer to peer programs that we have not had the capacity to deliver due to limited staff.
- An estimated 800 more educators receiving training and support on mental health and suicide prevention.
- We have a desperate need to reduce region size so staff are not traveling 2-5 hours each way to deliver training. We are at great risk for burnout of existing staff.

We look forward to the opportunity grow our services to address the urgent need for mental health and suicide prevention in our schools and communities.

I appreciate your support of this bill and I am here to answer any questions that you have.

Wisconsin Safe & Healthy Schools Center School and Community Participation by Location, 2012-2020



- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  2012-2013 |  2014-2015 |  2016-2017 |  2018-2019 |
|  2013-2014 |  2015-2016 |  2017-2018 |  2019-2020 |



Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools Center

Statewide Director



Tracy Herlitzke
CESA #4, 923 East Garland Street
West Salem, WI 54669
[608-786-4838](tel:608-786-4838); [800-514-3075](tel:800-514-3075)
therlitzke@cesa4.org

Regional Coordinators



NORTH—Serving CESAs #5, #9, #12
Lynn Verage
CESA #9, 304 Kaphaem Road
Tomahawk, WI 54487
[715-453-2141](tel:715-453-2141); lverage@cesa9.org



CENTRAL— Serving CESAs #2, #3, #6
Jackie Schoening
CESA #6, 2300 State Road 44
Oshkosh, WI 54904
[920-236-0515](tel:920-236-0515); jschoening@cesa6.org



WESTERN—Serving CESAs #4, #10, #11
Carol Zabel
CESA #10, 725 W. Park Avenue
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729
[715-720-2145](tel:715-720-2145); czabel@cesa10.org



EAST—Serving CESAs #1, #7, #8
Christine Kleiman
CESA #7, 595 Baeten Road
Green Bay, WI 54304
[920-617-5645](tel:920-617-5645); ckleiman@cesa7.org

Project Coordinator



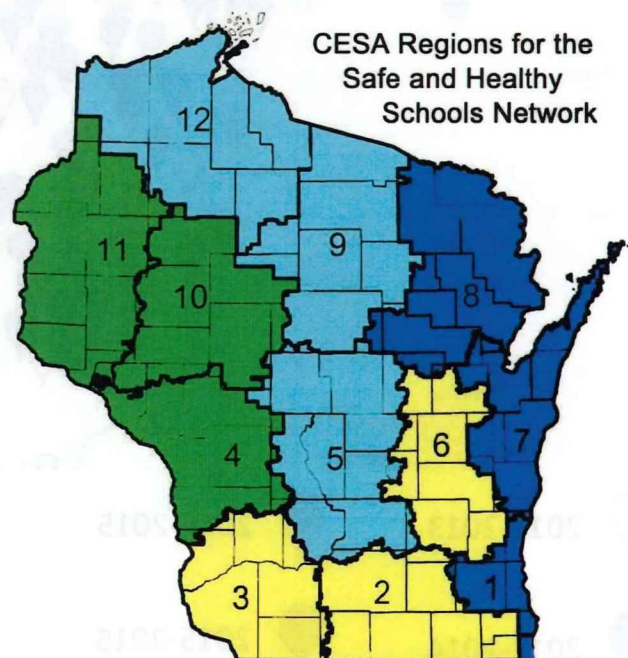
Alie Hubing
CESA #4, 923 East Garland Street
West Salem, WI 54669
[608-786-4807](tel:608-786-4807); [800-514-3075](tel:800-514-3075)
ahubing@cesa4.org



Every Child Safe, Healthy, and Connected

Who are we?

- Created in 2012
- Provide training and technical assistance to public and private schools on AODA, Bullying, Mental Health, School SBIRT, School Safety, Social Emotional Learning, Suicide Prevention, Trauma Sensitive Schools, Youth Mental Health First Aid, and more
- Read more on our website: www.wishschools.org



The Wisconsin Safe & Healthy Schools Center is a collaborative project between the [Department of Public Instruction \(DPI\)](#) and the CESA Statewide Network (CSN).

To the Senate Education Committee

RE: Senate Bill 506

March 2020

Senators;

By way of introduction, I am Jackie Schoening, WISH Schools, and CESA 6 Safe & Healthy Schools Consultant. I am a certified School Social Worker as well as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the state of Wisconsin. I have been employed by CESA 6 for 33 years working in School Social Work and program coordinator for the prevention and early intervention areas addressed in education. The WISH Center is the “training arm” of the DPI’s Student Services, Prevention and Wellness Team. We provide the majority of the trainings in prevention and early intervention as an extension of the Department.

As we all know, the youth of today are experiencing life in different ways than most of us did. They see the world as more stress-filled and anxious. Data shows up to 1 in 4 youth experience Mental Health Challenges. As a result, suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10-24. The CESA 6 Regional YRBS Data shows the Fox Valley Area has almost double the state rate for suicide ideation, and attempts. We have had multiple districts’ losing students (and staff and parents) in a short time frame. On our current Needs Assessment, there is one school district reporting losing 8 youth in the past two school years due to accidents or suicides. No district is immune to suicide, it knows no boundaries. Educators are overwhelmed by the impact.

Suicide prevention in schools means paying attention to changes in behavior, emotional distress, and problem-solving skills. This school-based perspective is in line with a behavioral definition of suicide that considers suicide as an attempt to solve a problem of intense emotional pain with impaired problem solving skills. The WISH Center provides training and support in the following ways:

QPR – Question Persuade - a suicide prevention gatekeeper training.

YMHFA – Youth Mental Health First Aid – a comprehensive mental health workshop on common mental health challenges we see in youth.

SBIRT – Screening Brief Intervention Referral to Treatment – a brief intervention process grounded in Motivational Interviewing techniques to assist youth in behavior change. We provide training and coaching to support implementation.

TSS – Trauma Sensitive Schools Training and support – providing educators and others with information and strategies to counteract trauma our youth experience. We provide training and coaching to support implementation.

SEL – Social Emotional Learning – assisting schools to address the social and emotional needs of youth within an academic environment. Schools teach both academics and social and emotional life skills to be a successful adult.

Building the Heart of Successful Schools Conference is an annual event attended by 500+ educators and partners. We include speakers and break out work sessions on mental health, trauma, resilience, and suicide prevention.

School-Community Partnerships – working with the partners in our communities to maximize the resources available. Examples include: Zero Suicide Coalition, Prevent Suicide Wisconsin, N.E.W Mental Health Connection, NAMI, WISE Wisconsin, PreAction, Community Coalitions and faith based resources.

Adults feel it is our responsibility to take care of and protect youth. We forget, however, that they are more likely to share confidences with each other than with adults. This means it's important to teach students how to recognize suicide warning signs, to not keep secrets about suicide, and how and where to get help for themselves or their friends if they are worried about suicide risk. In my region, districts have implemented, or are hoping to implement, Sources of Strength, Peer to peer programs, GSA, Peacemakers, Safe School Ambassadors, Hope Squad. These are important yet often expensive to bring trainers to the schools. In addition, the advisors and schools will also need to have training, implementation support and coaching to continue to succeed.

The WISH Center functions on four professional staff providing training and support, a Director and a new program assistant. With only four professional staff, and 400+ school districts; we work to meet the ever increasing needs of the educators in Wisconsin.

When Representative Ballweg asked me to present at the **Speakers Task Force on Suicide Prevention** last June, I was asked what would be a reasonable request to support the work I do. I suggested that having even two more professional staff to provide training and support would make the breadth of opportunities greater across the state.

I am grateful you have provided me the opportunity to speak to you on behalf of the children in Wisconsin. I appreciate your support of the work I do.

Respectfully

Jackie L. Schoening, MSW, LCSW

WISH Center Consultant and CESA 6 Safe & Healthy Schools Programs

www.cesa6.org

www.wishschools.org

920-420-5170 (c)



March 6, 2020

To the Members of the Wisconsin Senate Education Committee:

I am writing to express my support for SB506 that will increase funding to the Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools Center allowing for the expansion of training and technical support in the area of student wellness.

I have been an educator for 34 years in the Hudson School District in Hudson, Wisconsin, and currently serve as the Prevention Specialist for my district. During my long tenure, I have experienced, firsthand, the mental health needs of students increase with every year. This school year, Hudson High School has experienced 3 student deaths, two resulting from suicide. We have also seen a concerning increase in the number of students reporting suicidal ideation, suicide plans, and suicide attempts. This year, the number of high school students who reported elevated or clinical levels of depression doubled over last year alone! The mental health needs of our students have reached a critical level and the need for increased support and training is desperately needed.

Educators, by nature, place the needs of their students over their own needs, so the response of my colleagues and myself after our student's deaths was to immediately shift into triage mode, seeking to provide comfort, solace, and support to our students, staff, and school community. We also responded by following a suicide toolkit postvention protocol that no one I work with had ever been trained to implement. Well-meaning and very skilled educators felt ill-equipped in our response. Because postvention is prevention, the days, weeks, and months following a student death by suicide or unexpected tragedy are critical to the health and wellbeing of the entire school and larger community.

On a personal level, having been a teacher of each of the boys who died by suicide, the news of their losses sent me reeling. Our school community was still grieving the first death when the second occurred, followed by the third death a few short months later. The gravity of each loss was amplified by my feelings of guilt, despair, and helplessness. My grief continues to weigh heavily on me, affecting every aspect of my life and work. Each day I fear that it will happen again. How can I prevent this? How can I protect and support my students? How can we heal?

Youth suicide rates are on the rise and are now the second leading cause of death. Tragically, our resources to develop, implement and monitor effective programs that promote student wellness, prevent suicide and related behaviors, and promote healing has not kept pace. For these reasons, mental health supports for schools, such as SB506, are critically needed now.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Mitchell, M.S.E.
Prevention Specialist
Hudson School District