

# Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

February 28, 2024

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE:

I am vetoing Senate Bill 1014 in its entirety.


This bill would specify that the Department of Health Services must award grants to fund one or more health systems that specifically commit to providing hospital emergency department services in Chippewa County or Eau Claire County and agree to use any grant funds specifically for capital expenditures to aid in providing hospital emergency department services in Chippewa County or Eau Claire County. In addition, the bill would specify that the Department of Health Services must prioritize grant awards to support hospital emergency department services in Chippewa County. Finally, the bill would require: (1) health systems receiving grants to report to the Department of Health Services the amount of funding received, a detailed description of all capital expenditures for which the funding was used, and the impact of the funding on the hospital emergency department services; and (2) the Department of Health Services to report to the Legislature a summary of this information.

I am concurrently approving with improvements Senate Bill 1015, ensuring \$15,000,000 will be available to meet healthcare access needs for Western Wisconsin with the flexibility necessary to address urgent healthcare access needs that well exceed hospital emergency departments. These partial vetoes will broaden the scope of the grants, allowing the Department of Health Services to submit a plan for funding any hospital services meeting the area's pressing healthcare access needs. These crisis resources, due to my partial vetoes, will now also be available to support urgent care services, OB-GYN services, inpatient psychiatric services, and mental health and substance abuse services in the Chippewa Valley.

I am vetoing this bill in its entirety because I object to unnecessarily restricting crisis funding intended to address urgent healthcare access needs in Western Wisconsin. The Hospital Sisters Health System's (HSHS) recent closure announcement will result in a disruption of care for patients with ongoing needs, pregnant women, and those with mental health, behavioral health, and substance use disorders, among others. The state's response to this crisis must consider and be responsive to meeting the entire continuum of healthcare services that will be impacted in communities across the region, not just hospital emergency departments.

Under Senate Bill 1015, which I approved with partial vetoes today, \$15,000,000 in emergency resources are readily available and now have the flexibility necessary to meet the broader healthcare access needs of the Chippewa Valley region. The Department of Health Services has submitted an official request to the Joint Committee on Finance, asking the Committee to release these funds without delay. I urge the Joint Committee on Finance to work expeditiously to do so.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Tony Evers  
Governor