

Opioid Treatment Bills Don't Go Far Enough

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Assembly Democratic Leader Peter Barca speaks out on the bills debated Tuesday aimed at fighting the opioid epidemic.

MADISON - I applaud the bipartisan effort that led to the acknowledgment of this serious epidemic, but these bills could have a much greater impact to positively affect so many lives. In order to help Wisconsinites struggling with opioid addiction, we need to increase funding for treatment programs and expand BadgerCare.

Instead of working with Assembly Democrats, Republicans tried to shut down the debate. It's time to put people over politics. We need to follow the example of 31 other states and accept the BadgerCare expansion. We need a more complete and aggressive approach to this devastating epidemic.

Medicaid, known as BadgerCare in Wisconsin, is the most significant source of coverage and funding for critical substance abuse and prevention treatment. In the 31 states that have chosen to expand Medicaid, 1.2 million individuals with substance abuse disorders have gained access to coverage. By failing to expand BadgerCare, Wisconsin taxpayers are losing out on access to opioid treatment and resources paid for with federal money.

By June 30, 2019, Wisconsin taxpayers will have lost more than \$1 billion. We need to follow the example of every one of our neighboring states— Republican and Democrat—and expand Medicaid. Just this past week, we saw the legislature of Kansas vote on a bipartisan basis to accept the federal Medicaid fund—we'd like Wisconsin Republicans to do the same.

Olivia Hwang contributed this story. Rep. Barca spoke about legislation aimed at the opioid epidemic on Facebook Live; the video is available here: <https://www.facebook.com/RepPeterBarca/videos/1514005181956851/>.

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