

A Mom's Reminder: Still More to do in Opioid Crisis

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Two mothers who lost their children to addiction have taken their experience and turned it into advocacy and education.

MADISON, 11/10/2017 - This week two amazing advocates and grieving mothers, Bonnie and Bev, brought Faces of Addiction and Hope a story quilt to the State Capitol during our last session day of the year. It was a stark reminder we still have more work to do in the opioid crisis. Squares on the quilt showed people who have died, those incarcerated because of their addiction and those that are in recovery. It is a beautiful and tragic symbol. Both mom's lost their children to addiction and have taken their experience and turned it into advocacy and education.

As I spoke with them about the message they hope to share with the quilt, they shared how they wished our criminal justice system could be a better partner with those addicted to drugs and alcohol and how they hope more than anything that people can see the true reality of the disease of addiction. Treatment and care should be available to everyone because we simply cannot afford to lose so many. In 2015, nearly 900 people in Wisconsin died from overdose. That is a 70% increase since 2009.

Unfortunately, where you live in Wisconsin makes a big difference whether or not you have access to treatment programs and whether you have opportunities for care in the community.

Medicaid is the single largest payer of substance use disorder services in the nation and pays for one third of the medication assisted treatment programs. Right here in Sauk County we have a program that has been used as a national model for medication assisted wrap-around treatment. Ensuring that people have access to Medicaid or insurance through the Affordable Care Act plays a huge part in their success story.

Recruiting and keeping professionals that can provide treatment to those with addiction and other mental health disorders is also a barrier in many parts of Wisconsin. Increasing the reimbursement rate paid to substance abuse professionals will help make sure we have access to treatment outside of the major metropolitan areas in Wisconsin.

Accepting the BadgerCare expansion allowed in the ACA and covering more people with low cost health insurance in Wisconsin would make a huge difference to those in need of treatment and recovery. Unfortunately, we have been advocating to accept that federal money to no avail in the Wisconsin Legislature for a few years now. Truly only partisan politics stands in the way for Wisconsin to expand BadgerCare and I am hopeful some day we can move past that prideful political barrier.

As this Legislative session is coming to a close, I am also hopeful that the quilt will grow with white squares to show those in recovery and remain committed to legislation that supports our families and communities struggling with addiction and recovery.

For more information on the Faces of Addiction and Hope quilt contact my office at 608-266-6670 or sen.erpenbach@legis.wi.gov . You can see the quilt on [my Facebook page](#) .

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