



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 AB 529

Thank you, Chairman Thiesfeldt and members of the committee, for allowing me to provide testimony on Assembly Bill 529, 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.



Luther S. Olsen
State Senator
14th District

TO: Assembly Committee on Education
FROM: Senator Luther Olsen
DATE: Thursday, October 24, 2019
SUBJECT: Testimony for Assembly Bill 529

Thank you Chairman Thiesfeldt and members of the Assembly Committee on Education for holding a hearing and allowing me to testify in support of 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.

AB 529 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 Chairman Thiesfeldt and members of the Assembly Education Committee for holding a hearing today. I ask for your support on AB 529 and am available to answer any questions that you may have.



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

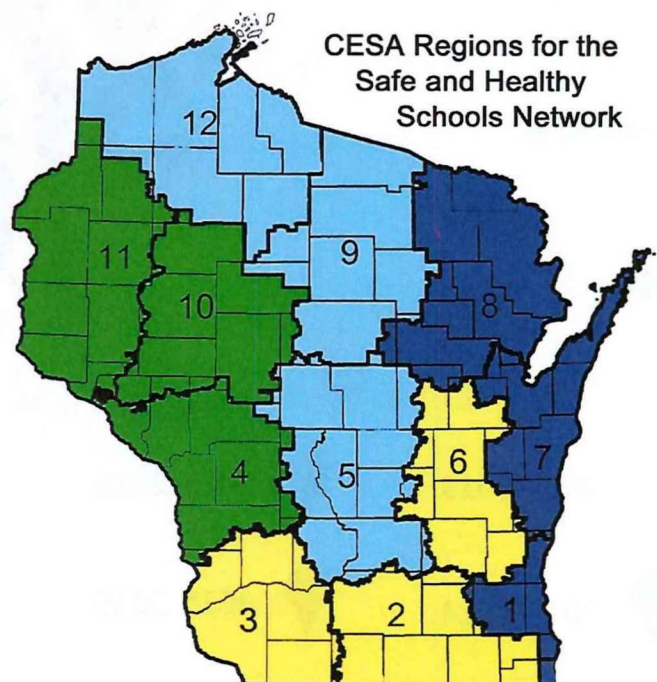
The Wisconsin Safe & Healthy Schools Center is a collaborative project between the [Department of Public Instruction \(DPI\)](#) and the [CESA Statewide Network \(CSN\)](#).



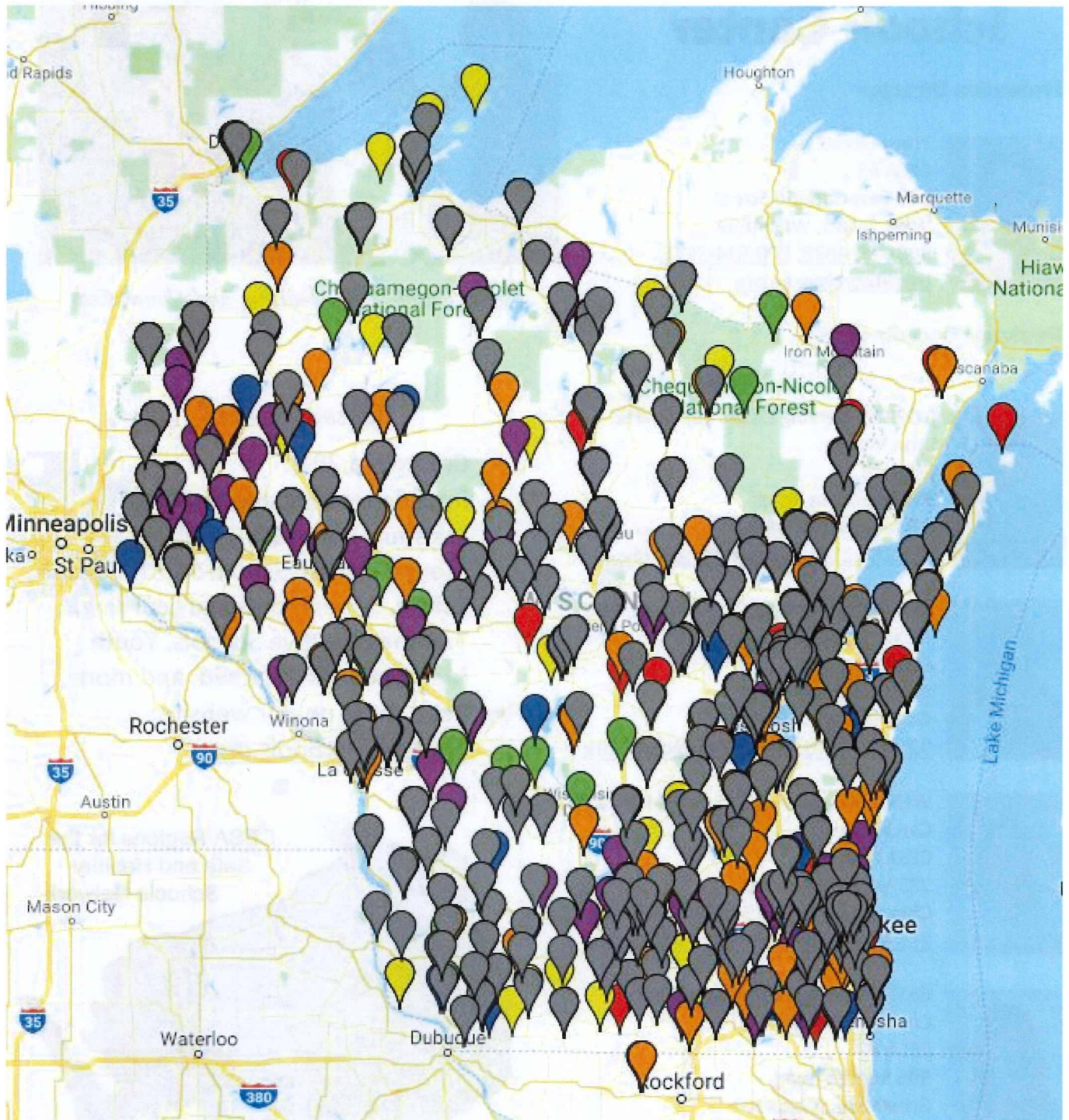
Every Child Safe, Healthy, and Connected

Who are we?

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



Wisconsin Safe & Healthy Schools Center School and Community Participation by Location, 2012-2019



Assembly Committee on Education
October 24, 2019

**Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Testimony in Support of 2019 Assembly Bill 529**

Thank you Chairman Thiesfeldt and members of the committee for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Assembly Bill 529 (AB 529). My name is Grant Huber. I am the Legislative Liaison at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). With me today is Brenda Jennings, Assistant Director on the Student Services, Prevention, and Wellness Team at DPI. This legislation directs DPI to annually award a grant to a Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) to support an existing collaborative project, known as the WISH Center, between DPI and CESAs for training and technical assistance to school districts related to 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. With the elimination of that funding, 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

AB 529 would enable the WISH Center to further increase the capacity of Wisconsin public school districts to respond to 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 requests your support for this legislation 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 testify in support of AB 529. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

¹ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. nd. "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>