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Joint Committee on Finance

December 21, 2022

Karen Timberlake
Secretary-designee
Wisconsin Department of Health Services
1 West Wilson Street
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Secretary-designee Timberlake:

Thank you for your letter dated December 15, 2022 regarding a variety of mental health initiatives and opportunities.

It is clear the Department of Health Services (DHS), the Legislature and stakeholders all share the common goal of using \$10 million set aside in the Joint Committee on Finance (JFC) Supplemental account to provide resources and support to help those who are experiencing a mental health crisis.

However, the 13.10 request DHS submitted to JFC for the use of these funds on January 25, 2022 leaves out important details and does not guarantee an effective use of valuable taxpayer resources. In addition, we *repeatedly* made formal and informal requests in spring 2022 for more information, but DHS has been unable or unwilling to tell us the specifics of how the funding will be distributed; provide detailed information about uses of the funds; or explain how different requests will be prioritized. We have, instead, resorted to requesting information on uses of the funds from stakeholder groups because your agency is unwilling to provide basic information. Your 13.10 request dated January 25, 2022 leaves many questions unanswered and deserves enhanced scrutiny and review by the Co-Chairs and the JFC.

Our goal is to ensure the \$10 million dollars is used in the most effective way possible so as to have the largest overall impact. **The best way to do this is to begin the process of implementing a regional approach to emergency mental health services, such as creating Crisis Urgent Care and Observation Centers, by using the Crisis Now Model as a guide.**

To meet this end, we have been actively engaging with stakeholders for months to reach a consensus on a regional approach to emergency mental health services. **While these discussions are ongoing, we welcome the opportunity to hear DHS's plan to implement**

the Crisis Now Model in Wisconsin to address the challenges and opportunities in the current system. Our staff will reach out to DHS Legislative Liaison HJ Waukau to schedule a time for the briefing.

We hope this briefing will be informative, including providing a review of how the Crisis Now Model is working in other states, and generate a productive discussion. It is also imperative that DHS is open to fully answering our questions and providing us with all of the information regarding the plan.

We look forward to working together to provide the best care to those experiencing a mental health crisis.

Sincerely,



Howard Marklein
Senate Chair



Mark Born
Assembly Chair