

## Sen. Alberta Darling Plays Politics With Suicide Prevention Hotline

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MADISON – In an effort to reduce the suicide rate in Wisconsin, Governor Tony Evers allocated \$220,000 over the biennium in his 2019-2021 state budget for the Hopeline, a suicide prevention hotline. However, Joint Finance Committee (JFC) Co-Chair, Senator Alberta Darling, and JFC Republicans delayed the release of those crucial funds in the name of politics. Despite the urgent need for suicide prevention funding, Sen. Darling waited months to release funds available for Hopeline that provides counseling to those contemplating suicide.

“According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, suicides in Wisconsin spiked 40 percent between 2013 and 2017. For months, Sen. Alberta Darling ignored a dire need throughout the state for urgent action on the suicide epidemic that grips communities of all kinds in our state,” said Katie Iliff, SSDC Executive Director. “Providing the necessary resources to prevent Wisconsinites from taking their own lives shouldn’t be subject to partisan politics. This is a crisis facing people in every corner of the state and the funds for the suicide prevention hotline should have been released months ago.”

This is the second instance of Sen. Darling playing politics with funds available in the state budget to prevent suicides. Governor Evers’ budget included \$200,000 in mental health funding for farmers burdened by the challenge of President Trump’s trade war with international partners. Darling and JFC Republicans delayed the release of those funds for months - even as Wisconsin’s family farmers demanded assistance from state lawmakers.

“Sen. Darling has manufactured not one, but two delays in the release of funds to prevent suicides -- all for partisan points. Time and time again, she has shown that she values political games over doing what is best for the people of Wisconsin,” concluded Iliff.