



We Need Your Help!

Contact your Representative TODAY and tell him or her to vote to pass the *Wisconsin Parity Act*. If you don't know your Representative, visit www.legis.wisconsin.gov/w3asp/waml/waml.aspx

Suggested Message to Representatives

These are just suggestions—it's best to use your own words and experiences:

I'm writing/calling as a constituent to ask that you vote to pass the *Wisconsin Mental Health and Substance Abuse Parity Act (Senate Substitute Amendment 1 to SB-362)*. As you know, the Senate passed the *Wisconsin Parity Act* on Jan. 28, 20-13, with strong bipartisan support.

With job creation Wisconsin's number one economic priority, the *Wisconsin Parity Act* will play an important role in helping our small businesses be more competitive. Parity provides an opportunity to improve both the mental AND physical health of workers—which can lead not only to lower healthcare costs but also improved employee productivity—and save Wisconsin businesses billions of dollars annually in reduced sick days, increased productivity, and decreased healthcare and disability costs.

The *Wisconsin Parity Act* will NOT lead to a dramatic increase in healthcare costs. Parity will cause health insurance premiums to increase by approximately 0.4 percent, according to the federal Interim Final Rules implementing the federal *Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-343)*, released Feb. 2 by the Departments of the Treasury, Labor, and Health and Human Services. This conclusion is based upon a November 2007 cost estimate prepared by the Congressional Budget Office—the most authoritative, independent, expert analysis of parity's economic impact on private-sector employers.

If implemented in the context of medical management and managed care, parity may, in fact, *reduce* or have little impact on overall healthcare costs, which are routinely twice as high for people living with substance use disorders than those without; and even higher for people living with both substance abuse and mental health disorders, according to the federal government citing studies of at least nine states.

The Wisconsin Parity Act recognizes the concerns of small business. New amendments will allow employers with fewer than 10 employees to opt out of complying with the parity provision for one plan year at a time. Additionally, the amendments permit larger employers who can show that parity has increased their insurance costs by two percent in the first year, and then one percent in later plan years, to opt out for one plan year at a time.

The Wellstone-Domenici Act—upon which the Wisconsin Parity Act is based—received support from both the business and insurance communities, with supporters that included the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Retail Federation, the American Benefits Council and America’s Health Insurance Plans.

Parity is good for Wisconsin’s children, whose scholastic achievement requires strong mental health. Untreated mental illness in schoolchildren leads to higher-than-normal dropout rates, and high rates of school absenteeism and tardiness. However, mental health problems can be successfully recognized, and most of the symptoms and distress associated with these disorders can be alleviated with timely and appropriate treatment and supports.

Mental illness and substance use disorders are serious medical illnesses that can be successfully treated. Substance use disorders affect 1 in 11 Americans; and mental illnesses affect about one in four adults (approximately 57.7 million people). Research has repeatedly confirmed the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of treatment for persons with mental illnesses and substance use disorders.

For these reasons I ask that you vote to pass the *Wisconsin Parity Act*.

Wisconsin Assembly Members

Each of the following eight Representatives voted “yes” on Dec. 17 as members of the Assembly Committee on Health and Health Care Reform to advance the legislation to consideration by the full Assembly. If you contact them, please thank them for their vote and ask for their continued support of this important legislation.

- **Rep. Jon Richards** (D-Milwaukee), rep.richards@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-0650
- **Rep. Chuck Benedict** (D-Beloit), rep.benedict@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-9967
- **Rep. Penny Bernard Schaber** (D-Appleton), rep.BernardSchaber@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-3070
- **Rep. Sandy Pasch** (D-Whitefish Bay), rep.pasch@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-7671. *Rep. Pasch is the lead sponsor of the bill. If you contact her, please be sure to thank her for her important leadership.*
- **Rep. Kelda Helen Roys** (D-Madison), rep.roys@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-5340
- **Rep. Donna Seidel** (D-Wausau), rep.seidel@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-0654
- **Rep. Jennifer Shilling** (D-La Crosse), rep.shilling@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-5780
- **Rep. Amy Sue Vruwink** (D-Milladore), rep.vruwink@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-8366

The full Assembly is:

- **Joan Ballweg** (R-Markesan), rep.ballweg@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-8077
- **Peter Barca** (D-Kenosha), rep.barca@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-5504
- **Terese Berceau** (D-Madison), rep.berceau@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-3784
- **Garey Bies** (R-Sister Bay), rep.bies@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-5350
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- **Ed Brooks** (R-Reedsburg), rep.brooks@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-8531
- **Fred Clark** (D-Baraboo), rep.clark@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-7746
- **Pedro Colon** (D-Milwaukee), rep.colon@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 267-7669
- **David Cullen** (D-Milwaukee), rep.cullen@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 267-9836
- **Chris Danou** (D-Trempealeau), rep.danou@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-7015
- **Brett Davis** (R-Oregon), rep.davis@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-1192
- **Kristen Dexter** (D-Eau Claire), rep.dexter@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-9172
- **Jason Fields** (D-Milwaukee), rep.fields@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-3756
- **Jeff Fitzgerald** (R-Horicon), rep.fitzgerald@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-2540
- **Donald Friske** (R-Merrill), rep.friske@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-7694
- **Phil Garthwaite** (D-Fennimore), rep.garthwaite@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-1170
- **Mark Gottlieb** (R-Port Washington), rep.gottlieb@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 267-2369
- **Tamara Grigsby** (D-Milwaukee), rep.grigsby@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-0645
- **Scott Gunderson** (R-Waterford), rep.gunderson@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-3363
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- **Gary Hebl** (D-Sun Prairie), rep.hebl@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-7678
- **Steve Hilgenberg** (D-Dodgeville), rep.hilgenberg@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-7502
- **Gordon Hintz** (D-Oshkosh), rep.hintz@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-2254
- **Kim Hixson** (D-Whitewater), rep.hixson@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-9650
- **Mark Honadel** (R-South Milwaukee), rep.honadel@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-0610
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- **Mary Hubler** (D-Rice Lake), rep.hubler@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-2519
- **Michael Huebsch** (R-West Salem), rep.huebsch@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-0631
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- **Dean Kaufert** (R-Neenah), rep.kaufert@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-5719
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- **Peggy Krusick** (D-Milwaukee), rep.krusick@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-1733
- **Daniel LeMahieu** (R-Cascade), rep.lemahieu@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-9175
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- **Sondy Pope-Roberts** (D-Verona), Rep.Pope-Roberts@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-3520
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- **Kitty Rhoades** (R-Hudson), rep.rhoades@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-1526
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