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STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

Capitol Update

By Senator Howard Marklein

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The Numbers Matter

I have always been the type of person to ask for more information. I want to know the story behind the headline and the data behind the story. I want to know why something is happening and I want proof based on facts.

My team and I have been working hard to collect, analyze and now distribute data related to COVID-19. There are several public sources for this information. We are primarily using data from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Wisconsin Hospital Association Information Center (WHAIC) data.

The volume of data available to us is massive. As such, it is really up to each of us to decide what numbers and data is important to us as we make decisions about COVID-19. Today, I am primarily focused on hospitalizations and hospital capacity because I think it is a strong indicator of whether or not our healthcare system is able to manage COVID-19 cases and the severity of cases overall. I am also analyzing the percentage of our population that has been impacted because I think it is important to understand the overall threat of the virus.

We must think critically about which measures indicate problems and improvements. We must also seriously consider whether or not the data reinforces or relieves our fears.

I am very sorry for every life that has been lost to COVID-19 and any other medical issue or accident. I have prayed for the families touched by the virus and other serious issues over the last several months. I believe that every life, no matter the age or other factors, is precious.

This is why I have been watching hospitalization data closely. I want to make sure that everyone who needs healthcare seeks medical services from their healthcare provider! Our hospitals are ready and able to serve you. If you have a need, please call your doctor. The data tells us that the hospitals in the 17th Senate District are not overrun – or busy – with COVID-19 patients. They are safe places that are taking extraordinary precautions to keep you safe and healthy, no matter your personal situation.

There are nine hospitals in the 17th Senate District including Gunderson Boscobel Area Hospital, Grant Regional Health Center, Southwest Health, Monroe Clinic, Upland Hills Health, Mile Bluff Medical Center, Memorial Hospital of Lafayette County, Richland Hospital and the Reedsburg Area Medical Center. On May 22, 2020, none of our hospitals had a COVID-19 Patient. There are nine inpatients, district-wide, who are waiting on results from a COVID-19 test.

I have also analyzed the data related to testing and mortality in the 17th Senate District. I wanted to know what percentage of our local population has tested positive or has passed away from the disease. These percentages are staggering.

Four of our counties – Green, Iowa, Lafayette and Vernon - have not had any COVID-19 related deaths. The county with the highest percentage of people who have tested positive is Grant County with only .15% (that's less than 1%, in case you miss the decimal point). Based on where you live, I challenge you to look at the numbers and assess your fears. This is real data and real people on a real day. I want you to know the real story.

MEDIA – county specific data for you to edit what you need.

In Grant County, .15% of the population (78 people) have tested positive and .02% of the population (10 people) have died from COVID-19.

In Green County, .13% of the population (49 people) have tested positive and no one has died from COVID-19.

In Iowa County, .05% of the population (11 people) have tested positive and no one has died from COVID-19.

In Juneau County, .08% of the population (22 people) have tested positive and .004% of the population (1 person) has died from COVID-19.

In Lafayette County, .09% of the population (16 people) have tested positive and no one has died from COVID-19.

In Monroe County, .03% of the population (16 people) have tested positive and .002% of the population (1 person) has died from COVID-19.

In Richland County, .08% of the population (14 people) have tested positive and .02% of the population (4 people) have died from COVID-19.

In Sauk County, .12% of the population (77 people) have tested positive and .005% of the population (3 people) have died from COVID-19.

In Vernon County, .04% of the population (13 people) have tested positive and no one has died from COVID-19.

It is important to know that COVID-19 Testing is widely available. If you have symptoms and want to be tested, you can be tested. There is no shortage of testing in Wisconsin. If you would like to be tested, please call your doctor, local healthcare provider or public health department to request testing.

You may also visit a Community Testing Site for free testing. There are several Community Testing Sites in the 17th Senate District, including Grant Regional Healthcare Center (698-723-2143) in Lancaster, the Richland Hospital (608-604-9953) in Richland Center and the Reedsburg Area Medical Center (608-524-6477) in Reedsburg. There is also a major testing site in Madison at the Alliant Energy Center on Rimrock Road, right off of the beltline. All of the sites ask that you call first to make an appointment. They each have different hours of operation for testing. For the Madison site, they ask that you connect

with your county's Public Health department for more information - <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/lh-depts/counties.htm>.

I will continue to monitor and share this data because I believe it is important for each of us to know the facts about the impact of COVID-19 on our communities. Please visit my website (www.legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/17/marklein) and my social media pages for daily updates.

As always, please do not hesitate to connect with me to provide input, ideas or to seek assistance. Send an email to sen.marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov or call 608-266-0703.