



22 EAST MIFFLIN STREET, SUITE 900  
MADISON, WI 53703  
TOLL FREE: 1.866.404.2700  
PHONE: 608.663.7188  
FAX: 608.663.7189  
[www.wicounties.org](http://www.wicounties.org)

For Immediate Release  
Contact: Mark D. O'Connell  
WCA Executive Director  
866.404.2700

June 30, 2021

## **WCA Commends Governor Evers for Signing of Opioid Settlement Bill into Law**

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) is praising Governor Evers today for signing into law legislation which puts in place a structure for the state and counties to receive opioid lawsuit settlement funds. Assembly Bill 374 will permit counties to use these funds to assist families which have been impacted by the misuse and abuse of opioids.

“Counties have seen the devastating impact of the opioid epidemic on our communities. From behavioral health to child welfare to law enforcement, counties and our communities have been deeply impacted,” said WCA Executive Director Mark D. O’Connell. “Today’s signing of AB 374 by Governor Evers will allow counties to reach those most in need.”

O’Connell continued, “Governor Evers, along with legislative leaders Speaker Vos, Majority Leader LeMahieu, and bill authors Representative Plumer and Senator Testin, put the people of Wisconsin first with their work on this bill. Counties across the state applaud their efforts.”

Four years ago, Wisconsin counties were leaders in a nationwide litigation effort against the opioid industry. Seventy-one of Wisconsin’s 72 counties and over 2,000 units of government across the country have filed lawsuits against the industry. The lawsuits have been combined into multi district litigation in the United States District Court-Northern District of Ohio. Defendants fall into three categories: manufacturers, distributors, and retailers.

Settlement discussions with distributors have accelerated in recent weeks necessitating states across the nation to consider structures to receive settlement funds and dedicate those funds to opioid abatement and mitigation.

Wisconsin needed to have a structure in place to receive the funds. AB 374 created such a structure, allocating 70% of the funds to counties and local government and 30% to the State’s Department of Health Services.

**-More-**

## **WCA AB 374 Signing- Add One-**

The legislation requires the Attorney General to follow current law by working with the Joint Committee on Finance for approval of the settlement, requires all funds be used for opioid mitigation and abatement, and sets aside any similar lawsuits filed after June 1, 2021.

“The settlement negotiations and terms are very complex and the provisions in the legislation are necessary for Wisconsin to receive the maximum amount of dollars from the opioid industry,” said O’Connell.

Chair of the Board of the Wisconsin Counties Association Lance Pliml of Wood County added, “Without this legislation, the state and counties could have lost vital opioid abatement funds. We are grateful for Governor Evers’ leadership in acting in the best interest of Wisconsin to get this money quickly to our local communities for mitigation and abatement efforts.”

O’Connell continued, “I credit the leadership and vision of Governor Evers in understanding the critical role counties play and the importance of seeing settlement dollars in our state as soon as possible.”

“Today’s action by Governor Evers was the right thing to do for Wisconsin, said O’Connell. “This legislation is truly historic and today, this was a win for the citizens of our great state.”

The Wisconsin Counties Association represents the interests of county governments at both the state and federal level and is located in Madison, Wisconsin. Learn more at [www.wicounties.org](http://www.wicounties.org) and find WCA on Facebook, Twitter (@WisCounties) and LinkedIn (WCA: Wisconsin Counties Association).

###