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Wisconsin News and Sports

Chances look good for mental health parity

by [Bob Hague](#) on November 11, 2009

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Legislation requiring insurance parity for mental health and substance abuse may become law. While small business groups have labeled the bill – which would require mental health coverage under all insurance plans – a jobs killer, the measure’s Senate author maintains that’s short sighted.

“I would say early intervention and taking care of people that have depression, are bipolar, or have alcohol or drug problems, is going to end up saving them money,” said state Senator [Dave Hansen](#). “It may be a minimum premium increase, but in the end you’re going to save money.”

Hansen, a Green Bay Democrat who’s authored the bill ([SB 362/AB 512](#)) with Assembly Democrat [Sandy Pasch](#) of Whitefish Bay, said they’re optimistic the bill will pass when lawmakers are back in session next year. “In 2001 we actually passed it in a bipartisan way out of the state Senate,” said Hansen, adding that the bill never received a hearing in the state Assembly. “We haven’t been able to bring it up since, but we have the majority now in the Assembly and Senate. There’s a real possibility of getting this passed.” This time, the proposal has received public hearings before committees in both chambers.

Currently, group health insurance plans in Wisconsin cap payments for mental health and substance abuse treatments at \$7,000, a rate which has not increased in twenty years.

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