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[00:00:01] **Speaker 1** All right, so we have it for the camera. Could you tell us your name and title and district?

[00:00:05] **Speaker 2** Yep. Rachel Cabral Guevarra I am Senator for the 19th Senate District and that is up in the Fox Valley.

[00:00:12] **Speaker 1** Okay. For the questions.

[00:00:14] **Speaker 2** Oh, talk to you talked about. You want me to do that?

[00:00:16] **Speaker 1** Yeah, we're good. So recent stats have shown that students and young people are struggling with mental health. Some are showing that half of the students are anxious. A third are hopeless. Even a quarter of young girls have considered suicide. What are your thoughts when you hear that students and young people are struggling with mental health?

[00:00:34] **Speaker 2** Yeah, well, the first thought that comes to my mind is that I'm very saddened that kids are struggling when I think back to my time. These are not things that I personally struggled with to the extent that I'm seeing that kids are struggling with today. As a family member of someone that struggles with mental health. The one thing that I do feel hopeful about, though, is that the stigma associated with mental health is being decreased. People are able to talk about it. People are able to seek help where in the past there weren't as many resources. And that stigma that I speak of was challenging not only for that individual, but for their families and for the community. And so as people get to talk about this more, as students become more aware of this and are able to share their feelings a little bit more, it's it makes me hopeful that we can address these issues and have good outcomes in the end.

[00:01:29] **Speaker 1** What part can state lawmakers play on this issue? Yeah.

[00:01:32] **Speaker 2** So a couple different areas. Number one would be funding funding for resources that are already established as well as resources that are available in the future. May that be in grant form, may that be in nonprofits, may that be for profits? That's one area that Governor Rivers has put within his budget. That's also one area that we're working on here in Senate, as well as Assembly, to look at other ways to provide resources and get these out there for students and for families, for communities. Another area that folks can place an impact on and is the policy. So last session we worked on my office, worked on some bills that looked at suicide prevention, bills that looked at not only for for children, but also for like EMT, police officers, firefighters. We also worked on bills that look at four clubhouses. So these are community gathering areas for folks that struggle with mental health. Let me think. We also worked on tag programs, CAD programs for that. So that's for drug abuse and getting people back into the communities. So policy and budget, I feel, are the biggest areas. But also, again, going back to the stigma, talking about this and making it aware, making it I don't know if I want to say acceptable, but making it not as negative as it used to be. When we look at statistics overall, not just for children but across the state, you know, you say one in four people struggle with some sort of mental health condition. That's a lot. It's more common than people recognize. But when I talk with my patients and I talk with constituents, people don't recognize that. They think they're the only one that is struggling and that's not the case.

[00:03:21] **Speaker 1** How did you encounter people or young people with mental health issues, either in your life or in your work as a family nurse practitioner?

[00:03:27] **Speaker 2** Yeah. So again, my family has had mental health within it. So that is something that we've always had to navigate. We have good days, we have bad days, we have good months, we have bad months. We also are well, not we, but I also as a nurse practitioner, have many patients that come in and you have that safe zone with it in a clinic setting with your patients. You know, there's that confidentiality. And so kids can disclose things to me that maybe they haven't disclosed to others, their family members, their peers at school. And so really being proactive in that environment and engaging and letting them know that there are resources and that I'm there to help and I'm not there to look down on maybe activities or thoughts that they might have is really important. Being able to make that connection so there's that trust, and I do that more, I would probably think, within the world of health care. Right. They'll look at you different as their their provider. Then they'll look at you different as your politician. Right. But I feel my my purpose when it comes to mental health starts within my clinic and within my patients and within my family and then comes over into politics so that I can give real life experience not only as a family member, but as a care provider.

[00:04:45] **Speaker 1** You are the vice chair of the Senate committee that deals with these issues. And, yes, 30 bills coming up on this issue that you're looking forward to that you think would help or that you want to see.

[00:04:54] **Speaker 2** Yeah. So not only bills, but going back to funding again. Also there are a lot of. Great programs that were in the budget in the past sessions that we're looking forward to carrying through this session. When it comes to bills so far this session, the ones that I've heard of and that we're working on, go back to those clubhouses, making sure that those are out there and available to individuals to go and find support. We are also looking at bills for storage of firearms. We did work on that last session, but we're bringing that back this session because when we when we certainly talk about gun control as a whole, there has to be some sort of outlets for folks to prevent. And if that is storing of these weapons and prohibiting people from having the tools to self-harm, I feel that's essential. I had a grandmother who committed suicide when I was younger, and so firearm suicide is definitely close to my heart. Other programs going back to drug treatment programs, making sure that there's resources out there and that people are aware of these programs. That's one thing that I find quite often when I go and talk to people that they're not aware of how many programs are out there and really making sure that the education and those source of those resources are known to people so they can access them. Give me the question one more time.

[00:06:18] **Speaker 1** Just looking. Wondering what bills or bills.

[00:06:20] **Speaker 2** Sorry. Sorry.

[00:06:21] **Speaker 1** I think we can cover that pretty well.

[00:06:23] **Speaker 2** Oh, are you sure? Yeah, I think I got more. Let me just look see, I t funny. Oh, gosh, there's a lot more.

[00:06:30] **Speaker 1** Okay.

[00:06:31] **Speaker 2** Do you want me to touch on more?

[00:06:32] **Speaker 1** Yes, briefly.

[00:06:34] **Speaker 2** He's like, No, I got more questions. I got more questions.

[00:06:38] **Speaker 1** Well, yeah. Let's move on to funding. You've mentioned it. Governor Evers has called this the Year of Mental Health. In his budget, he's earmarking 500 million for mental health, specifically 270 million to support student mental health. How much should the state spend on this issue?

[00:06:57] **Speaker 2** Oh, that's a great question. What I would say is I don't know if there's an exact number, but I do know that there are a lot of programs that need to be addressed. And when we talk about K through 12. Yes. When we talk about all other areas to farmers, when we talk about Elder, we talk about those challenging professions like police and fire. You know, I don't know if there's an exact number, but I do believe and I do support the funding to adequately support these programs so that people can get the help that they need. Some of the areas in particular city funding, so that looks at police officers and making sure that they are educated on how to manage a crisis situation so they can be called to a home where mental health is the main issue here, why they might be committing a crime or having some outbursts and so forth. So they learn how to manage that and can address those situations without just throwing somebody in jail. So city funding, we had had funding that looks at drug and treatment options, crisis centers. Last session, there was a lot of discussion on building crisis centers in this state. It ran into some roadblocks, but I have brought that idea back and I'm pushing and pushing within Senate as well as Assembly, that we established these crisis centers across the state of Wisconsin so that folks can get those adequate services and not have to wait days or weeks. We also have county funding. I know that that was an area that the counties are asking for assistance with because they're seeing more individuals utilizing the county services that weren't there in the past, residency programs. That's another area when we think about mental health funding that needs to be addressed. And when I say residency programs, I'm talking about making sure that we have enough providers to address people's needs. So funding of residency programs that be for psychiatrists made, that be for nurse practitioners, that focus in on psychiatry and mental health, maybe counselors. We're looking at different funding sources for that to make sure that we have enough of that here in the state of Wisconsin. Youth Crisis Stabilization Programs is another area that I've been talking with folks about to make sure that there's funding for that. And so can I give you an exact number? Now, all I know is this is a big price ticket, right? A big price tag, but it needs to be addressed, especially now when so much, so much light is being brought on mental health and the impact not only right now, but long term trauma for the individual, the family and the community.

[00:09:40] **Speaker 1** Okay. Shifting gears now to expungement, Senate Bill 38. What does this bill do?

[00:09:45] **Speaker 2** Yeah, So this bill, in essence, is divided into five particular areas. I'm working on this bill with Representative Steffens, who has worked on it for seven years. So he's the pro, but I've been able to hop in where Senator Darling has stepped out. So the big five areas is in essence, what it does is provides expungement for folks that might not have had this opportunity in the past or changed the law a little bit. Number one, for currently, expungement goes up to age 25. So what about the folks that are after that? Right. We're getting rid of that limit, that age limit that's associated with it. For expungement to be able to happen, these individuals would have to make sure that they've paid all their restitution, done all their hours, did everything that they needed to do to be qualified for this. It would also allow folks that were possibly damaged or injured to be notified that someone was up for expungement. One of the big areas that I was contacted for just by judges with this expungement bill has to do with when that idea of expungement can actually be granted. Okay. So currently what happens is if you are charged with a crime, the initial court hearings will determine if you can have expungement at the end or not. Now, a lot of judges were saying why? You know, what happens of things happened in between there and then you're just going to expunge this particular crime. This bill would say we're going to look at it at the end also and say, hey, is this. Appropriate, because a lot of times if people don't ask at the beginning of a trial or they don't know, they will not be allowed for expungement. And so this is an opportunity at the end to come back and say, you know what? I've done what I needed to do. I made an error. I shouldn't continue to be punished for something that I did in a foolish moment.

[00:11:37] **Speaker 1** How much do nonviolent felony convictions hurt people who are seeking a job or maybe housing?

[00:11:43] **Speaker 2** Yeah, they do. Originally, when I decided to get onto this bill with with Representative Steffens, it was because constituents had reached out to me. Constituents reached out and said, You know what, I wanted to join the military, but I couldn't because I made an error eight, nine years ago. I wanted to get my license in selling of insurance. I can't do that because of something I did when I was 17 years old. Right. So this is definitely something that's impacting people when it comes to work force, when it comes to housing. But what about self-worth? There's a lot of people that might have struggled with mental health when they were younger or whatever. The reason is made a stupid choice. And now ten, 20, 30, 40 years later, they're still being punished for this. So there has to be a right to a wrong not only on their end, but on our end also. Okay.

[00:12:30] **Speaker 1** Does this fly in the face at all of the tough on crime sentiments?

[00:12:35] **Speaker 2** I think you can still be tough on crime, but I think that you can also. Right. You're wrong. You know, you can make a mistake. Right. I get that. I think people should have consequences for the negative choices that they make. But you can also make that right. And so do I. Find this weakening the tough on crime? No, what I'm saying is make good choices. If you mess up along the way, make it right. And then let's come back and let's start over.

[00:13:04] **Speaker 1** Also, currently, state law allows for pardons for felony convictions. In fact, Governor Evers has set a record with 30,000 pardons. Why isn't the pardon process enough?

[00:13:18] **Speaker 2** Well, I think this is just another avenue of allowing people to make right something that they did wrong. I know. That's a great question. Cut this out. Let's see what I don't know if I have an answer for that. What are people said? How do you know an answer for that?

[00:13:37] **Speaker 1** I mean, pardons have always been, you know, on the table. Yeah. Now, governors have participated in granting them.

[00:13:43] **Speaker 2** It's kind of funny you brought that up. I was kind of thinking about that the other day. Why do we kind of have both of them? I will say that I'm very I feel that people there are a lot of people that have made poor choices in the past and may be getting a pardon or getting expungement. I think that there is some righting of wrongs and I do support that. And I think it is great that Governor Evers has provided pardons to some individuals. There are some that I have questioned a little bit, but overall, I'm I'm hopeful that if somebody, again, has made a poor decision. Everybody, all of us have. Right. If you're right, you're wrong. If you have not continued to make poor choices. I think that there's a reprieve in knowing that for moving forward. You can live a. I don't know if I want to say normal life, but you can be. That's the word I want to say. Bottom line is you can write your wrongs. That doesn't mean you're going to be punished for this the rest of your entire life.

[00:14:54] **Speaker 1** Okay. Okay. It is illegal to deny someone a job or housing based on their criminal conviction. Is there evidence of that happening that would lead to the need for this expungement bill?

[00:15:10] **Speaker 2** I don't know if I've actually had anybody come up to me and say that right in regards to employers or in regards to renters, you know, owners. But I have had people say that they suspected that that was the issue. So nobody has ever come up to me and say, no, I have not hired this individual because they have this particular record. But when somebody is well qualified for a job and doesn't get that or, you know, well qualified for an apartment and doesn't get that, you kind of question, what is the reason for that? And so I have had constituents say that they feel that that is the reason.

[00:15:48] **Speaker 1** Okay. And then to be clear, this expungement would just seal the records kind of from view so people couldn't look it up on the computer. Is that how this would work?

[00:15:57] **Speaker 2** From my understanding, actually, I don't know the answer. What is the answer to that question? The court sealed it is court sealed. Cut that out. You want to ask it? Yeah. I don't know that. The problem is this is a seconds, Bill. For seven years, we should have Steffens in here with me. He knows all the details in great force. So it's court sealed Hillary.

[00:16:21] **Speaker 1** Risk on the details of it. What exactly does expungement do?

[00:16:24] **Speaker 2** Expungement, in essence, steals the court records so that individuals note that they have completed all the requirements that they need for the crimes that they did and allows people to now not continue to be punished for the things that they were poor choices about in the past.

[00:16:41] **Speaker 1** How would this job, ultimately this reform, help jobseekers and employers?

[00:16:47] **Speaker 2** Yeah, job seekers and employers for job seekers. It is going to allow them, as I mentioned earlier, to not be able to be punished for the crimes that they did in the past. But it will also allow them to join military if they would like to. It will allow them to be qualify for programs where they might need special clearance. That is another area that I've seen. I know I mentioned the insurance sales that was from an individual within the can the district, but also I've seen some concerns with different specialty truck driving as well as areas where people might be entering homes. There's some concern about that. So it will allow them to have a broader, broader array of job opportunities. But when it comes to employers, the benefit is you now have a larger group to pick from. I know that it is challenging right now the amount of workforce that is available, but even if you throw another ten or 100 or 200 people in there to qualify for these jobs that they have out there, that will help their industry. So again, providing more opportunities by taking away the punishment of somebody that has completed all they needed to do to make things right.

[00:17:56] **Speaker 1** I think that's all I have.

[00:17:58] **Speaker 2** Kind of that middle section that I had no idea for place.