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Groups Urge Lawmakers to Preserve BadgerCare

New Budget Projections and Federal Bonus Dollars Make Harmful Changes Unnecessary

Today, 40 organizations sent a letter to state lawmakers urging them not to force thousands of Wisconsinites out of the state's highly successful and cost-effective BadgerCare health insurance program. The letter—signed by health care advocates, social service providers, faith-based organizations, and others--notes that new, lower estimates of the state's Medicaid funding shortfall, combined with a \$24.5 performance bonus from the federal government, should allow the Department of Health Services to halt its plan to make sweeping changes to BadgerCare that would shift health care costs onto the very people who can least afford it. Those changes would ultimately leave tens of thousands of children, low-income adults, and people with disabilities uninsured.

"The most recent projections mean Wisconsin can afford to keep our health care safety net intact," said Sara Finger, executive director of the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health and coordinator of the Save BadgerCare Coalition. "We call on Gov. Walker, Sec. Smith, and state legislators to do the right thing and make the health of Wisconsin residents a top priority."

The letter outlines the devastating impact that going through with DHS's proposed changes to BadgerCare would have: in addition to causing as many as 64,000 people—including 29,000 children--to lose their coverage, the changes would mean higher overall health care costs brought about by increased reliance on emergency rooms for health care services by people without insurance. It would also result in smaller bonus payments from the federal government in the coming years, thereby worsening the state's fiscal challenges.

"We have an opportunity to safeguard one of the most successful health initiatives in state history by taking advantage of these federal dollars and the lower deficit projections," said Finger. "It's time for officials to prove that they care about what's important—the ability to see a doctor when you need one."

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*The **Save BadgerCare Coalition** consist of health care providers, public policy experts, aging advocacy groups, disability rights advocates, consumers and the faith community working together to sustain Medicaid and BadgerCare and to ensure health insurance for Wisconsin families. For more information regarding the Save BadgerCare Coalition, please visit: www.savebadgercare.org*