

GOVERNOR'S POWER-GRAB PUTS WORKING WISCONSIN FAMILIES' HEALTH CARE AT RISK



On Friday, February 11th, Governor Walker introduced a bill that threatens Wisconsin's successful BadgerCare initiative. BadgerCare provides health insurance for over 750,000 women, men and children. The bill threatens each and every one of their care, because it gives the governor sweeping authority with no accountability.

The governor's proposal gives the Department of Health Services (DHS) broad power to enact "emergency rules" without legislative oversight, which could have dire consequences for Wisconsin.

- At least 65,000 working Wisconsinites will lose the basic health insurance they currently have.
- All of the nearly 1.2 million people in Wisconsin's Medicaid-related programs could lose health benefits under this bill.

The bottom line is that this bill allows DHS to ignore existing state laws that ensure women and families have access to basic health care services in Wisconsin. It gives the unelected Secretary of DHS absolute, unilateral, and indefinite power to make children, parents and adults uninsured; to deny coverage for specific needed treatments or preventive care; and to increase co-pays and premiums so much that hard-working individuals and families cannot actually use their coverage.

The governor has fast-tracked the bill, and it is expected to move from introduction to passage in both houses all within 48 hours. This is nowhere near enough time for the 750,000 Wisconsinites affected directly and the millions more who would question its undemocratic approach to have their say. There is no reason to rush this dangerous and sweeping proposal through without a well-informed and reasoned debate.

SO-CALLED "BUDGET REPAIR" BILL DEEMED NOT NECESSARY TO BALANCE BUDGET

The Legislative Fiscal Bureau, the non-partisan legislative agency charged with writing the state's budget, has indicated that the changes made by Walker's bill are not necessary to balance the state's budget. In a memo dated February 14, 2011, the LFB Director indicated that the provisions in the bill related to the Medicaid program are considered non-fiscal policy items. The bill actually removes the legislature from the entire process of making decisions about the Medicaid program.

- Governor Walker's plan to weaken BadgerCare will take away health care for hundreds of thousands of Wisconsin families and turn away much needed federal dollars.
- None of the Medicaid changes saves money in the current biennium. These proposals should be addressed in the biennial budget bill, which allows more deliberative legislative review and public input.
- It is a dangerous and undemocratic power-grab that would undermine the state legislature's critical role in setting health care policy, putting the governor and unelected bureaucrats in charge.

WE CAN KEEP BADGERCARE WORKING FOR WISCONSIN

Under Republican and Democratic governors, BadgerCare has delivered the care Wisconsin families need at a price they can afford. Now, during the worst economy in generations, the health and economic stability BadgerCare delivers is even more important. We can find responsible ways to balance the state's budget while protecting the health of Wisconsin families.