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PRESS ADVISORY FOR EDITORIAL BOARDS

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ABC for Health: Help Is Coming! Family Health Benefits Bill moves to the Assembly Floor
AB 878 will be heard and slated for a vote on the floor of the assembly on April 20, 2010

Madison, WI – Health reform is the law of the land and people across the country are preparing for changes. Wisconsin is in better shape than most states, but we can do better. The health reform bill's new rules and requirements are confusing and can overwhelm some consumers. We need to promote public private partnerships to help people connect to new and emerging public and private health insurance programs. We must prioritize actions that help people in Wisconsin to obtain and maintain health care coverage.

In preparation for a changing health care landscape, ABC for Health partnered with the Department of Health Services and the Office of The Commissioner of Insurance as well as lead sponsors Senator Mark Miller of Monona and Representative Donna Seidel of Wausau to develop the “Family Health Benefits Bill” (AB 878/ SB 633). Together, we are building a foundation to support a statewide network of Health Benefits Counselors in Wisconsin.

AB 878 will help families and individuals access health care coverage and needed services. Many under the age of 60 experience complex and convoluted health care coverage issues at the worst possible time when they or a loved one are ill. Still others are eligible for programs that are too difficult to understand without individual advocacy. Unpaid medical bills, collection actions and bankruptcy are often the outcome for overwhelmed families.

Wisconsin leads the nation in community based patient advocacy models. For example, Wisconsin enjoys a successful, coordinated network of Senior Benefits Specialists that provide similar support for people over age 60. Moreover, a growing network of Aging and Disability Resource Centers and Disability Benefits Specialists provide similar services. AB 878 replicates the strength of these programs and supports the creation of an un-duplicated network of advocates to support people under age 60.

ABC for Health is a Wisconsin-based, nonprofit, public interest law firm dedicated to linking children and families, particularly those with special health care needs, to health care benefits and services. ABC for Health's mission is to provide information, advocacy tools, legal services and expert support needed to obtain, maintain, and finance health care coverage and services.