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PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Media Interview: Bobby Peterson (608) 261-6939 ext. 201 (office) or (608) 444-7197 (cell)

ABC for Health: Help Is On The Way! Family Health Benefits Bill is Proposed

A Public Hearing on AB 878/SB 633 will be held before the Senate Committee on Health and Health Insurance and Assembly Committee on Health and Healthcare Reform on Wednesday, March 24, 2010 at 10:00am and 10:45am respectively.

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,” said Bobby Peterson, public interest attorney and Director of ABC for Health. Peterson says that the health reform bill’s new rules and requirements may be overwhelming for consumers. “We need to help people connect to new and emerging public and private health insurance programs. The new changes will be confusing and we must prioritize actions that help people 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 Miller and Representative Donna Seidel to develop the “Family Health Benefits Bill” (AB 878/ SB 633) to lay the foundation to support a statewide network of Health Benefits Counselors in Wisconsin.

Peterson says, “Families and individuals need help accessing health care and attaining and using health insurance coverage. 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.

“Community based patient advocacy models work,” noted Peterson. 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 and SB 633 duplicate the strength of these programs and support 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.

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