



**PRESS RELEASE
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June 23, 2011

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Committee Votes to Continue Rolling Back Consumer Initiatives in Health Insurance

Madison, WI—In a party-line vote, the Joint Committee for Review of Administrative Rules voted today to extend Commissioner of Insurance Ted Nickel’s “emergency rule,” rolling back the consumer protections related to readability and electronic access to insurance plans. Bobby Peterson, public interest attorney at ABC for Health, Inc., responded, “The Committee clearly prioritized insurance industry profits over consumer rights.”

The improvements in readability and access under attack today were implemented after extensive meetings by a working group, formed in October 2009 serving in an advisory capacity to then Commissioner Sean Dilweg. Representatives of the insurance industry, community members, advocates and literacy experts settled on a compromise position that raised the “readability score” of policies and made it easier for consumers to get their policies. The improvement allowed consumers to review and assert rights for covered services.

In February 2011, newly appointed Commissioner Nickel issued an emergency rule to roll back the new provisions, saying that the change would have been “too expensive” for insurance companies. However, when Nickel solicited comment on the emergency rule, 54 individuals and agencies spoke against it, while only 1 was in favor. The rule was implemented anyway. The Rules Committee this morning voted to continue the emergency rule on a 5-4 vote. Commissioner Nickel’s permanent rule on the rollback of readability is currently in committee.

Peterson continues, “The rollback of these important consumer protections related to readability and availability of electronic copies is a blatant giveaway to the insurance industry at the expense of consumers. To Commissioner Nickel and Deputy Schwartzer, this was an opportunity to demonstrate that you have transitioned from industry insiders to regulators looking out for the public interest.”

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.