



*Advocacy & Benefits Counseling for Health, Inc.
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Birth Cost Recovery Update - "The Birth Tax"

July 17, 2020

Hello Partners,

ABC for Health continues to track birth cost recovery policy in Wisconsin. We call the policy the "birth tax," due to the harsh and often unexpected financial impact on unmarried pregnant women and families seeking BadgerCare Plus in Wisconsin. Counties have certain flexibility in implementing this policy and recently some, like Dane County, have abolished the practice. Others, like Milwaukee County, continue to debate the inequities and practice of collecting the Birth Tax.

Update: Milwaukee County Board Committee on Finance Rejects the BCR Resolution

The [Resolution](#) requesting the Milwaukee County Department of Child Support Services discontinue the discretionary practice of pursuing birth cost recovery collections in child support cases in Milwaukee County was before the Finance Committee on Thursday, July 16, 2020.

In a disappointing move, Committee Chairman Jason Haas made a motion to *reject* the Resolution, stating that to abolish Birth Cost Recovery "would be disastrous to child support services." The Committee members present voted unanimously to reject the Resolution. (Voting to reject were Supervisors Johnson, Taylor, Czarnecki, Rolland and Sumner. Moore Omokunde was not present for the vote).

In the Birth Cost Recovery discussion before the Committee, Chairman Haas stated that the Resolution was written before COVID, which he said "is destroying our budget." The Committee comments tracked those made by Child Support Services Director Jim Sullivan, invited by the Committee to present on the Resolution. Sullivan said he opposed the resolution, saying "now is not the time" to consider eliminating Birth Cost Recovery, because of the fiscal impact it would have on the county child support office FTEs. Sullivan failed to mention the negative financial impact of the Birth Tax collections process upon mostly low income families and communities of color in Milwaukee.

The Committee also failed to discuss the impact of the Birth Tax on low income pregnant women seeking BadgerCare Plus or Medicaid, racial disparities of women asked to comply with the policy, sanctions for pregnant women not cooperating, or the potential impact on birth outcomes.

Next Steps:

Now that the Finance Committee has completed its discussion of this Resolution, it goes before the full County Board of Supervisors for a vote. Unfortunately, it will appear with the Finance Committee's recommendation to reject the Resolution.

The next full meeting of the County Board is Thursday, July 23, 2020 at 9:30am. It is not confirmed, but likely that the Resolution will be on that agenda.

This update is for informational purposes only.

Regards,

[Brynne McBride](#)

ABC for Health, Inc.