



*Advocacy & Benefits Counseling for Health, Inc.
Serving Wisconsin Families Since 1994*

Birth Cost Recovery Update - "The Birth Tax"

September 15, 2020

ACTION ALERT

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.

ACTION ALERT: Resolution To End the Birth Tax Goes Before the Milwaukee County Audit Committee

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 goes before the County Board's Committee on Audit on **Wednesday, September 16 at 1pm**. This meeting will be live-streamed on the [County Legislative Information Center](#).

The Resolution appeared as [item 5 on the robust Committee Agenda](#).

The mere existence of the Birth Cost Recovery policy is a deterrent to women enrolling in Medicaid – knowing that to do so may expose her partner to a collection action. That deterrent is even more dire during this COVID pandemic. Milwaukee's Child Support Office continues to play the role of "medical debt collector" during this time of national emergency.

The Child Support Office shared a "[supplemental report](#)" with the Audit Committee in advance of the meeting. Its own data shows the racial injustice of the policy. In their cherry-picked sampling of 100 cases from early August, almost 70% of the judgements/orders were directed at black fathers. Sadly, the Committee failed to solicit other important community or stakeholder input.

It is our hope that the Audit Committee recognizes the significant inequities inherent in the Birth Tax. In this difficult economic time, the Committee should understand the importance of supporting low-income Wisconsin families, instead of supporting collections work in low income communities.

This update is for informational purposes only.

Regards,

[Brynne McBride](#)

ABC for Health, Inc.