



**PRESS RELEASE
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A Birth Tax is Bad Policy for Wisconsin

Madison, WI- Today, ABC for Health, Inc. will present on the harmful impact of Wisconsin's Birth Tax at the Legislative Council Study Committee on Child Placement and Support. Birth Cost Recovery, the "Birth Tax," is a practice to pursue the recovery of Medicaid supported birthing costs from unmarried parents. Most states in the nation have abandoned this practice concluding that it is not in the best interest of infants, parents and families.

"Wisconsin is among a small handful of states that pursues this policy, and takes the most aggressive enforcement posture in the nation, collecting over \$16 million in 2016 - mostly from low income and minority families," says Bobby Peterson, Public Interest Attorney at ABC for Health. "Unlike child support, **none** of the recovered dollars go to support the children and families – and part of it goes as a collections 'bounty' to support and incentivize child support offices. This is not child support," continues Peterson.

The Study Committee on Child Placement and Support will hear testimony by ABC for Health through Peterson about this harmful practice in Wisconsin, particularly in Milwaukee and Dane Counties, and why it harms children and families and should be eliminated.

"The Birth Tax disproportionately impacts minority communities; concerns about the Birth Tax cause some mothers to forego Medicaid enrollment and access to adequate prenatal care, and negatively impacts a fathers' family engagement, employment, and child support. Most parents receiving a summons to appear in Court lack even basic legal representation. The Birth Tax assessment is not an equitable process but rather a collections steamroller," notes Peterson.

Peterson continues, "The Birth Tax on unmarried couples is simply bad policy in Wisconsin. ABC for Health is concerned that the policy has long been harming efforts to reduce infant mortality, lift families out of poverty, and encourage unmarried fathers to play an important, supportive role in their children's lives. We have advocated that Wisconsin abandon the policy altogether, or at a minimum, modify it to reduce the negative, unintended consequences to our children and families."

Celebrating 25 years in 2019, ABC for Health, Inc., 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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