



PRESS RELEASE

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What Governor Walker's Budget Bill Means for BadgerCare/Medicaid

Walker's bill shifts decision-making power from legislature to political appointee

Madison, WI—Governor Walker's budget bill allows the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) to make broad changes to BadgerCare/Medicaid eligibility and services behind closed doors with perfunctory legislative review by a politically stacked Joint Finance Committee. Bobby Peterson, public interest attorney and Executive Director at ABC for Health, Inc., noted, "The bill subverts the democratic process and harms enrollees in Wisconsin's Medical Assistance programs."

Walker's bill allows the Secretary of the DHS to set new restrictive eligibility limits; limit coverage for some groups, including certain infants and pregnant women as well as non-citizens; change offered benefits; create more paperwork and red tape for enrollees; and make many more changes. "The human and civil rights of Medicaid and BadgerCare enrollees should not so easily be forsaken," said Peterson.

ABC for Health has produced a webcast explaining how Walker's bill takes power over BadgerCare/Medicaid away from elected officials and gives it to the DHS. The webcast is available to the media and the public at this link: <http://96.60.62.171/mediasiteabc/Viewer/?peid=e0a8962a08e74b88aabcb7e67f8afa8a>

"Eligibility for vital health care coverage programs for the Wisconsin's most vulnerable children and families should be a legislative responsibility, not the responsibility of an out of state political appointee. Walker's delegation of authority to the DHS may in fact be illegal," says Peterson. "First, these are questions of policy that don't belong in a budget bill. And beyond that, the DHS is an administrative agency; it cannot be granted power that rightfully belongs to the legislature."

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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