

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

CAPITOL UPDATE

November 2, 2007

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State Budget Summary

The legislature approved the state budget on October 23rd and the Governor signed it on Friday, October 26th. The following summarizes the actions taken in the budget on the issues identified by the WCC in its advocacy to the Joint Committee on Finance.

Children and Families

- **Shelters for the Homeless:** Allocate \$1 million for homeless shelters.
Outcome: The budget directs the Department of Commerce to distribute a total of \$2 million in transitional housing grants.
- **W-2 Benefits for Pregnant Women:** Provide cash assistance to unmarried pregnant women who cannot work due to an at-risk pregnancy.
Outcome: This is not included in the budget.
- **Wisconsin Shares:** Fully fund childcare assistance and ensure that there are no waiting lists or higher co-pays for care.
Outcome: The budget “under funds” the Wisconsin Shares program by almost \$7 million. As a result, families will pay higher co-pays. However, eligibility requirements will not be affected, nor will there be waiting lists.

Corrections

- **Earned Release Review Commission:** Include provisions for the Earned Release Review Commission and encourage prisoners to reform their lives by working toward an early release.
Outcome: The budget does not include the Commission, but it does expand the Earned Release Program, which provides substance abuse treatment for inmates while in a correctional facility. Once inmates have successfully completed treatment, they are eligible for early release. As a result of this expansion, the program is expected to save the state a total of 704 beds over the biennium.

- **Treatment and Diversion Programs:** Allocate more funds for community based drug and alcohol treatment and prison diversion programs.
Outcome: The budget provides \$375,000 to Milwaukee County for its TAD (also known as TIP) programs. The budget further directs the Department of Corrections to submit a report to the Joint Committee on Finance by May 1, 2008, on the impact of the TAD program on the Department's 2009-11 biennial budget.
- **Medical Services for Women in Prison:** Increase health care funding for women at Taycheedah Correctional Facility.
Outcome: The budget expands health services (especially for mental health) for women inmates at Taycheedah by 33.25 medical staff positions.
- **Legal Services to the Indigent:** Provide \$1 million to organizations that provide civil legal services to the poor.
Outcome: This item is included.

Education

- **Parental Choice:** Extend the Choice program to all high schools in Milwaukee County and to Racine.
Outcome: The budget does not extend the Choice program, but it provides \$10,114,000 in 2007-08 and \$18,738,000 in 2008-09 for payments to the MPCP. This will cover the state's 55% contribution under the choice program based on projected enrollments of 18,000 students for 2007-08 and 19,000 students in 2008-09.
- **SAGE:** Increase support for the SAGE smaller class-size program.
Outcome: The budget provides an additional \$13,396,100 annually for the SAGE program. The increase allows the per pupil payment amount to increase from \$2,000 per pupil to \$2,250, as required under the 2005 Act 125.
- **Chapter 220:** Maintain funding for programs that foster equal educational opportunity through school transportation services.
Outcome: The budget maintains funding for the Chapter 220 program.
- **Job Bias against Offenders:** Continue current law, which allows schools to avoid hiring convicted felons who have committed an offense related to a job. Avoid provisions that allow institutions to refrain from hiring any and all felony ex-offenders.
Outcome: Current law remains in effect.

Health Care

- **Access to Health Care:** Create a budget that significantly expands the number of Wisconsin residents who have access to affordable health care. Any proposal expanding access to health care must also respect human life from conception until natural death.
Outcome: The budget provides \$127,000 in 2007-08 and \$31,463,100 in 2008-09 to implement BadgerCare Plus.

Subject to approval by federal agencies, the BadgerCare Plus initiative will begin January 1, 2008, and will expand eligibility for the state's health insurance premium assistance program (HIPPA) for families with incomes up to 300% of the federal poverty level (FPL); increase eligibility for the MA benchmark plan up to 300% FPL; provide coverage for unborn children; set eligibility for regular medical assistance (MA) at 200% FPL for pregnant woman and families with children; and include certain migrant workers, their dependents, and individuals under age 21 who have aged out of foster care.

- **Youth Exiting Foster Care:** Extend Medicaid coverage to youths exiting foster care up to age 21.
Outcome: BadgerCare Plus will provide coverage for youth exiting foster care.
- **Funding of Abortion Providers:** Support provisions that prevent the Department of Health and Family Services and counties from funding organizations that counsel or provide abortions. Instead, use funding to provide services to pregnant women.
Outcome: This item is not included.
- **Family Planning Waiver:** Oppose the expansion of the Family Planning Demonstration Project and do not allow individuals under the age of 18 to participate in the program.
Outcome: The budget does increase eligibility requirements for the Family Demonstration Project to include women earning incomes up to 200% of federal poverty level (the original limit was 185% FPL), but the budget does not extend the project to males.

New Bills of Interest

[SB-292](#). **Human Trafficking** (Coggs) Prohibits human trafficking. *To Judiciary and Corrections.*

[AB 547](#). **Cemetery Authorities** (Kaufert) regulation of and registration requirements for certain cemetery authorities, cemetery associations, and cemetery merchandise. *To Small Business.*

Web Sites of Interest

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/waml>

- Who are my legislators

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/leginfo.html>

- 2007-08 Session Schedule
- Weekly Schedule of Committee Activities
- Senate and Assembly Daily Floor Calendar

Capitol Update is a periodic e-mail on legislative issues from the Wisconsin Catholic Conference. To "subscribe" or "unsubscribe" please send a request to office@wisconsincatholic.org.

Wisconsin Catholic Conference
131 W. Wilson St., Suite 1105
Madison, WI 53703
608/257-0004
www.wisconsinatholic.org