



TO: Members, Joint Committee on Finance

FROM: Rev. Scott Anderson, Wisconsin Council of Churches
Michael Blumenfeld, Wisconsin Jewish Conference
John Huebscher, Wisconsin Catholic Conference

DATE: December 2, 2013

RE: Special Session Bills LRB 3678/1 and 3687/1

We write jointly urging that you include childless adults in the health care coverage packages you are fashioning in this special session.

Like many other organizations, we applaud the provisions in these drafts that maintain eligibility for Medicaid, BadgerCare Plus, and HIRSP programs for additional time until the transition to coverage under the Affordable Care Act is more complete. Access to health care coverage for needy people is vital for their well-being and for a healthy Wisconsin. Maintaining an adequate "safety net" for people in need is a necessary task of government and we are grateful for the legislation that achieves this.

But in one important respect, this task is incomplete. Eighty three thousand of our most vulnerable neighbors, childless adults, will remain unable to enroll in Medicaid for three months. We cannot leave them outside our circle of concern.

The moral claim of these 83,000 to the good of health care coverage is no less than that of the rest of us. Their innate dignity as human beings is not diminished by their poverty. Their character is not measured by their economic worth. Their need cries out to be met.

Many of these 83,000 are working. Others are elderly and have worked for much of their lives. Still others cope courageously with disabilities that prevent them from working. A policy decision to include them in health care coverage does not foster their dependency. Rather it reaffirms our state's commitment to social justice.

Just five days ago, we Americans celebrated as one to thank our Creator for the blessings and material abundance He has bestowed upon us. It is incongruous that we would now enact a policy that leaves so many of our poor brothers and sisters outside the door of affordable health care. We all should reflect on whether history will regard this as an act of a grateful and generous community.

Just last week Pope Francis observed that the world's poor are still waiting for the benefits of an economic system that is supposed to pass wealth down to them. We should not ask 83,000 of our brothers and sisters to wait three more months for access to a good so critical to their well-being during the coldest part of the year.

Thank you for considering our views in this matter.

CONTACT:

Rev. Scott Anderson, Wisconsin Council of Churches: (608) 837-3108

Michael Blumenfeld, Wisconsin Jewish Conference: (608) 257-1888

John Huebscher, Wisconsin Catholic Conference: (608) 257-0004