

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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CATHOLIC CONFERENCE BACKS PLAN TO REMOVE MINORS FROM FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference appeared at a Capitol press conference this week to voice support for proposed legislation to restrict public funding of contraception for minors.

The proposal offered by Senator Glenn Grothman (R-West Bend) would modify the state's Medicaid Family Planning Waiver Program, which currently covers certain girls and women between the ages of 15-44. Under the bill, only women 18-44 would qualify for the program.

Currently, in order to participate in the Medicaid Family Planning Waiver Program, a woman must not be eligible for services under another publicly funded health care program (such as BadgerCare) and her gross family income must not exceed 185% of the federal poverty level. However, "(t)eens are able to apply on their own with only the teen's income counted." (Source: Department of Health and Family Services) This feature of the Program makes free contraceptive services accessible to virtually every minor in the state.

Kathy Markeland, Associate Director of the Wisconsin Catholic Conference spoke in support of the proposal noting that the publicly funded program undermines the parent-child relationship by providing free access to contraception and other reproductive health services without the knowledge or consent of parents.

She emphasized that "when it comes to human sexuality, we should avoid the mistake of thinking that *information* can be a substitute for *formation*. Formation is primarily the right and responsibility of parents. We are better served by assuming parents will exercise that responsibility than by assuming they won't."

"Young people do not grow into people of character in a vacuum," Markeland continued. "They must be guided and formed. They need help to make good decisions. They need the security of knowing that we are proud of the person they are and the person they are becoming. When we send mixed messages to young people, we rob them of that security."

"Removing minors from the Family Planning Waiver program is no guarantee that parents will be more informed about their child's sexuality, but it will remove one of the publicly funded activities that dilute the message many parents want to send," concluded Markeland.

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