



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Members of Joint Committee on Finance

FROM: Kim Wadas, Associate Director, Education and Health Care

DATE: June 7, 2007

RE: BadgerCare Plus Initiative, LFB Paper #383

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference supports the BadgerCare Plus proposal as it increases access to health care services for Wisconsin's uninsured and vulnerable populations.

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference has long advocated for a just system of health care that provides quality, affordable access to all. To truly build a "culture of life," the health care safety net must affirm that those at the margins receive adequate, affordable medical care. The common good, that is the dignity of our whole human family, rests on the quality of care we provide for those in need.

As stated in Legislative Fiscal Bureau Paper #383, an estimated 235,000 Wisconsin adults were uninsured for all of 2005. Based on figures from a 2005 Wisconsin Health Survey, the LFB paper also noted that approximately 110,000 of Wisconsin's children are uninsured. By assisting children who have grown up in foster care, pregnant women, and other individuals who may have difficulty in accessing health care through the private sector, the BadgerCare Plus program maintains Wisconsin's commitment to protecting the dignity of human life and shows compassion of our most vulnerable citizens.

The BadgerCare Plus proposal not only assists those in need in our community, but also provides coverage in a fiscally responsible manner with deference to employer and private sector resources that already assist individuals with their health care needs. BadgerCare Plus defrays future costs to the state by ensuring Wisconsin's children and families receive early care and treatment, foregoing the need for high cost emergency care. This initiative would also streamline the State's current BadgerCare/Family Medicaid system by making eligibility determinations more uniform and lowering administrative costs. All this while increasing the range of services offered to program participants.

As the legislature seeks to balance many priorities within the given fiscal constraints, we urge the Committee members, and all of our elected representatives, to remain focused on those at the margins. The cost of providing health care services to those in need may well be staggering, but it is simply wrong to ignore those in suffering who have no recourse under the current system.

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference urges you to support the BadgerCare Plus initiative and ensure critical health care services are available for those in most need of our compassion and assistance.