



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Members of Joint Committee on Finance

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

Kim Wadas

DATE: June 7, 2007

RE: Expansion of Family Planning Demonstration Project, LFB Paper #387

On behalf of the Wisconsin Catholic Conference I request that you not expand the scope of the family planning demonstration project as proposed by the Governor. Indeed, the program should not extend to minor children at all.

Even as we make this request, we affirm the proposition that all Americans should enjoy access to affordable health care. This has been a goal of the bishops of the United States since 1919. It remains a major priority for the Wisconsin Catholic Conference and we hope comprehensive health care reform is one of the policies enacted in the 2007-08 legislative session.

However, how we provide access must be assessed in the context of the common good and its impact on how we live. For several reasons, we must oppose the expansion of the family planning waiver program.

The primary effect of this expansion is to increase access to contraceptive services by children. This undermines the parent-child relationship and devalues abstinence until marriage. While adults in our society are legally free to live as they wish and behave as they wish in private personal relationships, the government ought not give its implicit endorsement to conduct that has socially undesirable consequences for minors.

We recognize some will argue that contraception serves to reduce unwanted pregnancies and the social ills that may ensue, including abortion. But we are confronted with the hard truth that broader access to contraception has not served to reduce the abortion rate nor the incidence of children being born to unmarried women. Indeed the opposite has occurred. Thus even on pragmatic grounds government-funded access to contraceptives is not successful social policy.

For these reasons, we ask that the project not be expanded. Rather, the funds used for this should be redirected toward the basic health care needs of those who lack access to affordable health care.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.