



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 11, 2025

WCC TESTIFIES IN OPPOSITION TO BILL THAT WOULD UNJUSTLY BURDEN PEOPLE RECEIVING AND IN NEED OF MEDICAID

On April 10, the Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) offered [testimony](#) in opposition to [Assembly Bill 163](#), which requires the redetermination of eligibility every six months for individuals receiving Medicaid and other programmatic changes.

Under current law, individuals must renew their Medicaid eligibility every year. Under this bill, individuals are required to renew eligibility every six months and face a possible six-month suspension from Medicaid for failure to disclose information.

WCC Associate Director David Earleywine explained that public assistance programs, like Medicaid, exist to aid individuals and families meet their basic needs. Furthermore, he explained that the Church holds that health care is a basic human right. Access to health care for all has been supported by the U.S. bishops since 1919. While the Church and many private charities help provide needed services, private charity cannot make up for the State's abdication of responsibility to assist the most poor and vulnerable.

Those who currently receive Medicaid are individuals who have disabilities, are pregnant, have chronic conditions or diseases, and are children or adults living in poverty. Earleywine stressed that, "By and large, these individuals are trying to make ends meet, not defraud the government."

Earleywine further emphasized that the proposed renewal process will be overly burdensome to both the state and individuals. He added that, "While renewal is necessary and important, a six month-renewal will ... likely result in individuals not having access to care when they most need it" and lead to "missed deadlines, appointments, treatments, and medications."

The WCC's other major objection to the bill is the unjust nature of the six-month suspension of benefits for mistakes or failure to disclose information. The bill does not distinguish between a person making an innocent mistake and one who knowingly withholds information.

Earleywine concluded by underscoring that:

Reforming public assistance programs to reduce poverty, dependency, and inefficiency is a laudable goal. However, any program reforms must ensure that people in need do not become targets. Overly bureaucratic and punitive measures to ostensibly reduce fraud and encourage responsibility all too often have the opposite effect of increasing burdens and further impoverishing the most vulnerable. We urge that any changes to Medicaid prioritize access to quality care so that every can live a dignified life.

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