

Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health: State Legislative Proposals Would Help Protect Patients if ACA is Fully Repealed

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Madison, WI – The Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) applauds state legislative leaders for introducing several pieces of legislation that would protect Wisconsinites from some of the many harmful provisions of the GOP sponsored American Health Care Act (AHCA) which will undermine most of the current patient protections contained in the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

It is widely recognized by health care policy experts that the AHCA would have a disproportionately harmful impact on women's health both because of the changes it would make to the private insurance market and because of the cuts it would make to Medicaid. As result, these state based proposals are particularly important for Wisconsin women.

“While the ultimate responsibility to reject an ACA repeal lies with the U.S. Senate, Wisconsin needs to prepare for the worst case scenario of AHCA passage,” said Sara Finger, Executive Director of WAWH. “In light of our Governor publically supporting the AHCA which would devastate affordable patient coverage and protections in our state, we need to ready to ask our State Legislature to support a series of proactive bills to protect the health and economic security of women and their families.”

The legislative package introduced by State Senators Jon Erpenbach and Latonya Johnson and State Representatives Daniel Riemer, Chris Taylor, and Debra Kolste includes five separate pieces of legislation, which would:

1. Maintain access to state Medicaid reimbursements for family planning providers
2. Ensure certain essential health benefits are provided by private insurance plans
3. Prohibit lifetime and annual limits on the medical expenses insurers will cover
4. Prohibit insurance companies from charging people with preexisting conditions higher rates or excluding them from coverage altogether
5. Require insurance companies to provide coverage without cost sharing for certain preventive services

While these proposals would not address many of the incredibly harmful provisions contained in the AHCA (such as an approximately \$880 billion cut to Medicaid), they would ensure that Wisconsin does not exercise the authority given to states under to AHCA to eliminate many of the important consumer protections that currently exist under the Affordable Care Act. Additionally, one of the bills would address the AHCA's prohibition on Medicaid recipients from using their insurance to access family planning services at Planned Parenthood clinics, which would cut tens-of-thousands of Wisconsin women off from the family planning clinics upon which they rely for essential health care services. The proposal would require the state Department of Health Services to use state funding to cover services provided at family planning clinics that may become excluded from Medicaid reimbursement under the AHCA to ensure that low-income women continue to have access to family planning services.