

Kids Forward: Opposes Governor Walker's dangerous changes to BadgerCare

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CONTACT: Jon Peacock, Research Director, Kids Forward
jpeacock@kidsforward.net, 608-284-0580 x 307

The following is the response of Kids Forward's executive director, Ken Taylor, to the federal approval today of some of the changes the Walker Administration has been seeking to make to BadgerCare:

The BadgerCare changes approved today by the Trump administration will significantly increase the number of uninsured Wisconsinites and move our state backwards in terms of health care. We should be increasing access to health care, not making it harder for people to get the care they need. Many adults with income below the poverty level will lose their BadgerCare coverage because they are unable to pay the new premiums that will be required.

The new premiums will apply to single adults who are making as little as \$6,070 per year, and many people in that income range do not have checking accounts or credit cards that they can use to pay monthly premiums. No other state has gotten federal approval to completely remove people below the poverty level from Medicaid because they are unable to pay premiums.

The new changes to BadgerCare such as premiums, copays, and work requirements will vastly increase red tape and make the program far more complicated to administer. That will make BadgerCare more expensive for the state to operate and more difficult for people to navigate.

BadgerCare is a critical program for low-wage Wisconsinites, allowing them to obtain and secure work. By making it much more difficult for low-wage workers to maintain their BadgerCare coverage, these policy changes will be an impediment to workforce participation.

The new BadgerCare changes will not only create hardships for the affected individuals and their households, but will also indirectly hurt other health care stakeholders. That's because restricting access to the preventative health services that BadgerCare provides will increase reliance on hospital emergency rooms. That is far more expensive than preventative care, and hospitals will have to provide significantly more uncompensated care. That increased expense will be shifted to other patients and people with insurance.