

AARP: Guv's budget is a win-win for older Wisconsinites

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MADISON, WISCONSIN – Governor Evers' 2019-2021 budget includes a call for federal Medicaid expansion, which would save millions of dollars for the state while extending health care coverage to tens of thousands of our most financially vulnerable residents, says AARP Wisconsin State Director Sam Wilson.

Currently, Wisconsin's Medicaid program, called BadgerCare, covers adults up to 100% of the federal poverty line (FPL), or about \$21,330 per year for a family of three. If the state fully expands Medicaid, 82,000 adults between 100% and 138% of the FPL would also be covered by BadgerCare.

Expanding Medicaid would not only increase the number of adults who are insured, but it would improve a variety of health and economic outcomes for individuals and the state.

"Accepting Medicaid expansion would save Wisconsin about \$320 million over the next two years by maximizing the federal share of Medicaid in BadgerCare," Wilson said. "That is real money our state can use to help Wisconsinites live, work, raise families and age with dignity. We look forward to working with the governor and legislature to make this expansion happen."

This infusion of federal money will strengthen the long-term care system by boosting wages for the direct care workforce, expanding access to dementia care specialists, and investing in innovative approaches to systemic health equity issues.

In addition to Medicaid expansion and long-term care system investments, the Governor's budget seeks to address one of the most pressing issues in health

care today, exorbitant increases in prescription drug costs.

“This is one of AARP’s top priority issues in Wisconsin and across the country,” Wilson said. “Prescription drug companies are making billions in profits off seniors and hardworking folks. Wisconsin has always been a leader in finding ways to keep these costs at bay for its residents, and we commit to working with lawmakers at the state level and in Congress to lower prescription drug costs.”

Besides health care issues, Evers’ budget addresses the financial challenge of long-term retirement savings that both younger and older Wisconsinites face. A proposed feasibility study will look at the possibility of creating a retirement plan open to all workers who choose to participate.

“Wisconsinites are anxious about having enough money for life after work and rightfully so,” Wilson said. “Many workers don’t even have an option to save for their retirement in their workplace. We need an option that will help workers grow the savings they need to have the health and retirement security we all hope to have in retirement.”

AARP is also pleased to see enhancements to the Homestead Tax Credit. The credit will provide increased relief to low-income Wisconsinites to meet their property tax burdens.