

Evers unveils \$28 million budget plan to boost funding for women's and infants' health care

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Gov. Tony Evers says his nearly \$28 million budget plan to increase funding for women's and infants' health care will ensure "our state is strong and healthy."

The gov's "Healthy Women, Healthy Babies" initiative aims to expand access to preventative care, such as cancer screenings; support healthier pregnancies; reduce infant mortality rates; and address racial disparities in maternal health care and child care.

The plan, which Evers unveiled at Milwaukee Health Services Inc., would also bring Planned Parenthood "back into the fold" by restoring its access to funding that was blocked by then-Gov. Scott Walker.

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Wisconsin President Tanya Atkinson applauded Evers for "championing women's health and lifesaving preventative care" in his budget.

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"As the state's oldest and most trusted nonprofit reproductive health care provider, we know these policies will positively impact our patients and are an important step in keeping Wisconsin safe, healthy and strong," she said.

But Wisconsin Right to Life objected to restoring funding to Planned Parenthood.

"We agree, Governor Evers, we can't have healthy communities without healthy women and babies," Executive Director Heather Weininger said. "And the first step in ensuring they are safe and healthy is to guarantee Planned Parenthood is not

involved in the destruction of lives through abortion across our great state.”

Evers’ announcement comes a week before he’s set to deliver his state budget address. Specifically, his plan would:

- *Allocate \$22.8 million in new funding to expand postpartum coverage for women under the Medicaid program. It would also order the Department of Health Services to seek a waiver to extend the coverage under the Children’s Health Insurance Program from 60 days after child birth to one year.

- *Make Planned Parenthood eligible to again receive federal Title V and Title X funds. Changes to state law were made in the 2011-13 biennial budget that blocked Planned Parenthood from accessing Title V state and federal block grant funding for maternal and child health. And a bill from 2015 restricted the organization from receiving Title X federal funding for family planning services.

- *Allocate \$387,200 for the Women’s Health Block Grant, which provides grants to public health departments and private groups that cover cancer screenings, STI testing and treatment, pregnancy testing and more. Under Walker’s budgets since taking office in 2011, Planned Parenthood has been unable to receive that block grant funding.

- *Direct DHS to create an Infant Mortality Prevention Program by reallocating five existing full-time positions to the program, which would aid families in finding secure housing and jobs and provide nutritional and family support.

- *Provide an additional \$3.2 million in funding to the Department of Children and Families’ Family Foundations Home Visiting Program, which helps mothers who are at a high risk for a poor birth outcome. The money would come from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant.

- *Invest \$767,200 in the state’s Minority Health Grant, which is awarded to organizations that assist minority populations with high health disparities.

See a background sheet on the plan from Evers’ office:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/-190221EversPlanBackground.pdf>

See a Fox6 News video of Evers’ comments:

<https://www.facebook.com/fox6news/videos/152222192362211/>