

LaKeshia N. Myers: In times like these, we need common sense

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Having grown up in the Baptist church, I have an affinity for music from the “golden age” of gospel. As a child, my mother and grandmother, would listen to the music of Clara Ward, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, and James Cleveland. But no group held more esteem than Albertina Walker and the Caravans; and my grandmother’s favorite song, “In times like these.” That song came to mind this week when I learned that the state of Wisconsin would lose \$1.6 billion dollars over the next two years if Republicans in leadership do not expand Medicaid in the next budget.

The nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau reported that Wisconsin would earn more than \$1 billion in new cost savings if the state adopts Gov. Evers’ call for Medicaid expansion in the upcoming budget. According to the report, incentive funding included in the American Rescue Plan, which President Biden signed on Thursday, would provide Wisconsin with an estimated \$510 million in equivalent savings from the state’s general fund in 2021-22 and \$515 million in 2022-23, but only if the state expands BadgerCare. Expanding BadgerCare has been a point of contention between Democrats and Republicans for nearly a decade; Wisconsin remains the only Midwestern state and one of only twelve nationwide who have not yet accepted Medicaid expansion. Enough is enough.

Wisconsinites are hurting; while the pain was evident in years prior it has been exacerbated in the wake of COVID-19. The Governor’s proposal would expand Medicaid eligibility to an additional 82,000 Wisconsin residents with incomes between one hundred percent and one-hundred thirty-eight percent of the Federal Poverty Line. Prior to the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2014, BadgerCare covered only 52,000 parents; the state expects that this population would enroll in Medicaid under the proposed expansion, along with 30,000 childless adults. This expansion would help the very population that has been hampered by the sting of COVID-19 and also suffering under the injudicious policies of the Republican-led legislature for far too long. Individuals who work multiple jobs for low wages, are in

need of mental health services that are likely not covered by insurance coverage, and those that have gaps in their private insurance coverage. Those that live in rural communities that have limited access to fully functional hospitals, and those that require treatment for substance abuse and other addictions. Real people, with real problems; those that are trying to make ends meet day-to-day.

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In the song, “In times like these”, Albertina Walker issues a stern warning; she says, “Be very sure, be very sure, your anchor holds and grips the Solid Rock!” As of today, Republicans aren’t very sure. Their illogical and harmful policies aren’t anchored on anything but false pride and ego; which is baffling because members of the legislature have full medical and dental benefits, and get paid monthly regardless of how much (or less) they work. The people do not have these luxuries and it is high time that Republican leaders are called out and made to answer for their defective policy. In times like these we need true leadership; and people who are willing to turn off partisanship and operate with common sense and logic. Medicaid expansion is what is best for the people.

I encourage all Wisconsinites to contact their state legislators and demand they pass a budget that includes Medicaid expansion. To contact your legislator, please call 1-800-362-9472.

- Myers, D-Milwaukee, represents the 12th Assembly District.