

# Sen. Roys: The Building Families Act, helping Wisconsinites become parents

Posted on Monday, Nov 1, 2021

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Madison – Today, state legislators released the Building Families Act, which provides insurance coverage for fertility treatment and fertility procedures.

One in eight couples have trouble getting pregnant or sustaining a pregnancy, yet only one in four of those can access the care they need to treat infertility. The American Medical Association, American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the World Health Organization recognize infertility as a disease. Yet, infertility care is cost-prohibitive for many. Most patients have to pay out of pocket for fertility treatment, which can amount to well over \$10,000, depending on the services received.

Nineteen states, including Illinois, have passed fertility insurance coverage laws. Thirteen of those laws include IVF coverage, and eleven states have fertility preservation laws for medically-induced infertility. Comprehensive reviews of states with mandated infertility benefits show that the cost of infertility coverage is less than 1% of the total premium cost.

The Building Families Act recognizes infertility as a disease, expands access and removes economic barriers to fertility treatment, and requires health plans to cover infertility treatment and fertility preservation services. This legislation offers people help and hope as they try to grow their family.

**The bill's authors and community members issued the following statements in support of the legislation:**

**Sen. Kelda Roys, 26th Senate District (Madison):**

*“Being able to parent is a reproductive right. The exorbitant cost of fertility treatment is a barrier for many in their attempts to grow their family. It should not matter where you live or what job you have — coverage for infertility should be included in health care insurance plans.”*

**Rep. Jodi Emerson, 91st Assembly District (Eau Claire):** *“Choosing when to start a family is one of the most personal decisions an individual can make. For those who are experiencing infertility issues or for same sex couples, finances should never get in the way of them wanting to start a family. Having love, not money, should determine what makes a family.”*

**Dr. Bala Bhagavath, MD - Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility Specialist**

*“The United States Supreme Court ruled in 1998 that reproduction is a major life activity and any condition that interferes with reproduction should be regarded as disability. This bill is extremely important for the health of our citizens and the good of Wisconsin economy.”*

**Jamie Hannam, Waterford Patient:**

*“As a patient going through infertility, having insurance coverage for fertility treatment has been absolutely life changing. I wouldn't have my family without the coverage graciously provided by my employer.”*

**Kathy Waligora, Pleasant Prairie Patient:**

*“Undergoing IVF over the last year and a half has been emotionally and physically grueling and absolutely necessary for my husband and I to realize our dream of being parents to living children. Because my employer is based in Illinois, which requires insurance coverage of fertility treatments, we have never had to consider stepping away from our dream for financial reasons. Passing the Building Families Act will bring that same comfort to so many of our families facing the immense grief of being unable to treat infertility and build their families without insurance coverage.”*

**Collin Hawkins, Eau Claire Patient:**

*“For years the pain after each negative pregnancy test, the stinging guilt of jealousy after every forced smile at yet another baby shower, and the deep uncertainty of whether we’d ever be able to partake in the joy that so many families take for granted was only eclipsed by the stress, anger and exhaustion of navigating the complex and expensive world of infertility treatment.” In January of 2016 Hawkins and his partner welcomed twins into the world—still he often reflects on how differently things could have gone had the couple not had access to savings and family able to provide financial assistance. “It’s hard to think of yourself as being lucky while blowing through years of savings, but that’s exactly what we were.”*

**Joyce Reinecke, Executive Director of the Alliance for Fertility Preservation:**

*“We are thrilled to see the inclusion of fertility preservation services in the Wisconsin Building Families Act. Providing this coverage will allow newly diagnosed Wisconsinites to focus on their cancer treatment, while knowing that their ability to one day have a family is being valued and protected.”*

**Molly Guthrie, Senior Director of Public Policy and Advocacy at Susan G. Komen:**

*“Unfortunately, younger women are more likely to be diagnosed with more aggressive cancers which are more likely to require chemotherapy, potentially impacting their ability to have children. These women should not be forced to worry about the added financial burden of fertility preservation.”*

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