

American Cancer Society Action Network: Wisconsin Legislature prioritizes cancer prevention and early detection, misses opportunity to increase access to care

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Madison, Wis. – March 9, 2022 – The 2021-22 Wisconsin legislative session ended this week. This session was marked by important wins for cancer prevention and early detection, as well as battles against unwarranted efforts to create barriers to accessing care.

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) commends the Legislature for maintaining funding for the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program and the Well Woman Program. However, ACS CAN regrets lawmakers' support for legislation that will unnecessarily hinder access to health care coverage for limited-income Wisconsinites.

The following is a statement is from ACS CAN Wisconsin Government Relations Director Sara Sahli:

“The Tobacco Prevention and Control Program is critical to protect young people from becoming addicted to dangerous tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, and help adults quit. It is also vital to reduce the burden and health disparities that stem from tobacco use. While smoking rates have declined in Wisconsin over the last decade, we’re seeing that progress stall and more kids are becoming addicted to tobacco as a result of the e-cigarette epidemic. The tobacco industry’s marketing strategies have led to higher use of tobacco products among

people with limited incomes, Black people, American Indian and Alaskan Native people and residents in rural areas, among others.

“The Well Woman Program provides a lifesaving safety net for thousands of limited-income, uninsured and underinsured women in our state who are otherwise unable to access cancer screenings and treatment. Preserving funding for this state program is truly a matter of life or death for the more than 5,580 mothers, daughters and wives in our communities who will be diagnosed with breast or cervical cancer this year.

“While we thank legislators for maintaining funding for these programs that are key to reduce the suffering and death caused by cancer, we’re deeply disappointed that **SB 905/AB 934** and **SB 912/AB 936** passed. These two bills impose harmful and unnecessary barriers to access **BadgerCare, our state Medicaid program**. We are asking Governor Evers to veto these bills. Without these vetoes cancer patients and survivors – as well as those with other complex chronic conditions – can be seriously disadvantaged and find themselves without health care coverage because they are physically unable to comply with the work requirements or the red tape to maintain coverage.

“If our lawmakers are serious about protecting our health and lives, we urge them to return millions of our federal taxpayer dollars to Wisconsin and help the 91,000 hardworking, low-income Wisconsinites in our communities gain access to affordable, quality health care by fully expanding **BadgerCare**.

“Ending cancer as we know it requires bold new public policies that promote cancer prevention and early detection, and expand access to quality, affordable health care. We look forward to working with our elected leaders to create a healthier Wisconsin for our family friends and neighbors.”