

Kids Forward: Senate passes bills scapegoating people on BadgerCare

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The state Senate passed two bills they claim will strengthen Wisconsin's workforce, but instead they will make it less likely Wisconsinites can keep the health coverage they need through BadgerCare. These changes will create more barriers that make it harder and more complicated for people to keep their coverage, and they will likely exacerbate existing racial inequalities in our health care system

"Everyone who works full-time should be able to keep themselves and their family healthy, put food on the table, and a roof over their head. However, far too often jobs pay too little and don't offer affordable health insurance, leaving people with few options," said William Parke-Sutherland, health policy analyst for Kids Forward. "BadgerCare provides a safety net of affordable coverage for low-income adults, parents, and children. These changes would weaken the workforce by making our state sicker and would worsen stark racial inequities in who has access to care and coverage"

One of the bills would disqualify some adults from their BadgerCare coverage for six months if they turn down any offer for a full-time job, increase in hours, or wage increase - even if that job doesn't offer health insurance that the worker can afford, has hours they can't make work, or is totally unsuitable for their circumstances. There are no restrictions on the type of job, level of compensation, or benefits that someone would be forced to accept or else risk losing their BadgerCare eligibility.

The other bill creates costly red tape and hoops people will have to jump through to renew their BadgerCare coverage. It would require some adults covered by BadgerCare to submit twice as much paperwork in order to renew their coverage, punish them for not reporting changes in circumstances fast enough, and forbid the state from using one of the best tools they have to make sure people have

uninterrupted health insurance coverage.

Parke-Sutherland said that both of these proposals would likely have a disproportionate impact on Black, Indigenous, and Latinx Wisconsinites, despite the fact that the majority of people covered by BadgerCare are white. These bills would make it more complicated and costly to operate the program.

William points out, “Participants would need to send in more paperwork, answer more phone calls, and navigate more bureaucracy. These burdens would fall hardest on people already experiencing health disparities, facing access barriers, and dealing with racism and discrimination.”

These proposals risk increasing the number of people who are uninsured, and because more than 7 out of 10 adults enrolled in BadgerCare are already working, it would do little to address the worker shortage in our state.

“If the legislature wants to strengthen the workforce, it should help address real barriers to work such as affordable childcare, transportation, and access to broadband, ” Parke-Sutherland said. “It should recognize that in order to move forward as a state, we need to confront and help mitigate our state’s stark racial inequities in health care access, employment, and economic security.”