

Kids Forward: Wisconsin decision makers choose the wealthiest 1% over struggling children & families

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Late last night, the republican-controlled Joint Finance Committee gutted the supports that struggling families across Wisconsin desperately need.

“Many of Wisconsin’s families—especially our Black and Brown families—are in crisis mode,” stated Michele Mackey, Kids Forward CEO, “On the eve of Juneteenth, decision makers chose the wealthiest 1% over everyday people.”

Notably, despite the state’s strong fiscal position, they voted against extending postpartum coverage to people covered under BadgerCare.

“Wisconsin lawmakers’ decision to turn a blind eye to the maternal health crisis in our state, that is disproportionately killing Black mothers and infants, is a shameful act of callous negligence,” stated William Parke-Sutherland, Senior Health Policy Analyst for Kids Forward.

Black women in Wisconsin are significantly more likely to die due to pregnancy-related causes than white women. This disparity persists regardless of income or education. Providers, advocates, community-led organizations, and legislators on both sides of the aisle have spoken strongly in support of extending this coverage for parents after they give birth. However, all republicans on the committee voted against this provision that would have provided critical coverage for thousands of people, from Milwaukee to Menomonie.

Wisconsin is one of a shrinking minority of states that only provides health coverage for 60 days after pregnancy, which is not long enough to cover all recommended

follow up exams, nor enough time to address issues that might come up during a six-week follow-up visit. Forty-three states, including Texas, Alabama, and Mississippi, have either implemented one-year postpartum coverage or have approved plans to do so.

In addition to postpartum coverage, the republican-controlled Joint Finance Committee has also gutted several other measures that would have supported children and families, including:

- **[Paid family leave](#)**, so workers wouldn't have to choose between paying their bills and caring for a child or other loved one
- Decreased **[funding for our state's early care and education system](#)**, including Child Care Counts, which provides direct support to child care programs and directly supports a robust workforce in the state
- **[Investing in our public schools](#)**, including **[mental health services](#)**
- **[Returning 17-year-olds to the juvenile justice system](#)** and ensuring that youth are treated as youth, not adults
- **[Access to drivers' licenses for Wisconsin residents](#)** who are currently blocked due to immigration status
- **[Access to gender affirming care](#)** for those struggling with gender dysphoria, transition or seeking gender reassignment
- **[Investing in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation](#)**, which supports Social Emotional Learning and early childhood development

"It is beyond alarming that our legislature can not come together and do what's best for Wisconsin's most vulnerable. Our children deserve so much better. The strategic divestment into early childhood and postpartum care will continue to secure Wisconsin's position as the top producer of poor outcomes for Black children and families, in the country." Kisha Shanks, Policy Director BCDI-Wisconsin.

Kids Forward calls on Governor Evers to do everything in his power to make sure that whatever budget is adopted at the very least begins to address the stark racial disparities that are holding Wisconsin children and families back.