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House Passes Bill Sharply Reducing Access to Health Care Coverage Statement by Jon Peacock, WCCF Research Director

The passage of the Affordable Health Care Act (AHCA) by the U.S. House of Representatives will have a devastating impact on Wisconsin's children and families if the Senate also approves this ill-conceived legislation. We urge Wisconsin's Senators to reject the House bill and instead support health care legislation that puts children and families first.

House leaders rushed this legislation through before getting an independent analysis of the amended bill from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO). That means that our nation's leaders and their constituents have no idea how much worse the bill has gotten and how many more people will lose coverage.

At a minimum, we know that the bill decimates Medicaid, cutting more than \$800 billion over 10 years. And we also know from a preliminary CBO analysis that enacting the bill would cause at least 24 million more people to be uninsured within a decade, and it would sharply increase costs for many more.

Without so much as a single public hearing, the bill includes provisions changing the fundamental nature of Medicaid by placing a cap on federal funding, which will gradually result in rationing of care. That change and others will put many of our most vulnerable Americans at risk, including children, seniors, people with disabilities and pregnant women. The arbitrary cap on Medicaid will put more than 460,000 Wisconsin children on BadgerCare in harm's way.

This measure also opens the door for insurers to deny coverage for pre-existing conditions, putting kids with asthma, diabetes, heart defects and other conditions at risk. The recent addition of \$8 billion to fund high-risk pools comes nowhere close to covering the cost of care for these kids and other people suffering from pre-existing conditions. The bill even turns back the clock to a time when insurers could deny coverage for life-saving treatments by imposing annual and lifetime caps.

We call on our Senators to stand up for Wisconsin's children, seniors, people with disabilities, pregnant women, families and those with pre-existing conditions who will be harmed if this bill becomes law.

The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families is a multi-issue policy research and advocacy organization promoting statewide policies that ensure a safe and healthy future for every child in Wisconsin. For more information, visit www.wccf.org.