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Budget Bill Fails to Include Remedies for Wisconsin's Stark Racial Disparities

The following is a statement by Ken Taylor, Kids Forward's Executive Director, regarding the passage of the final budget:

Wisconsin residents deserve a budget that makes sure the door to opportunity is open for all.

It is time for state policymakers to ensure that all Wisconsinites can succeed, by reversing policies that contribute to our state's shameful disparities, and by enacting initiatives that will help make Wisconsin a more equitable state for people of color.

Unfortunately, lawmakers have finalized a state budget that squanders a golden opportunity to make the investments needed to decrease Wisconsin's enormous racial and ethnic disparities in health, education, economic well-being, and safety.

The Legislature turned down proposals by the governor that would help create a more level playing field in Wisconsin by:

- *Rejecting BadgerCare expansion, which would reduce the number of uninsured Wisconsin residents, who are disproportionately people of color. The savings would have funded initiatives that would help reduce racial disparities.*
- *Sharply cutting aid increases for K-12 education that would help children the furthest from opportunity, including kids of color.*
- *Failing to reshape the tax system to give less advantage to wealthy, mostly white residents and instead, increasing a tax credit that disproportionately benefits white homeowners.*
- *Leaving in place a ban on driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants, a prohibition that tears families apart and inflicts trauma on children.*

In addition, neither the Legislature nor the governor tackled reform of the adult corrections system in a meaningful way. The budget leaves in place a system that has resulted in a black incarceration rate that is among the highest in the country.

Wisconsin's kids, particularly our kids of color, deserve better.