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For immediate release

Kids Forward Commends Governor Evers for Taking Steps in the Budget to Reduce Racial Inequity

The following is a response by Michele Mackey, Kids Forward's Chief Executive Officer, to the budget bill unveiled yesterday by Governor Evers:

We applaud the Governor for proposing a budget that makes much-needed investments in the fundamental building blocks for Wisconsin's growth and future prosperity – our children, families, schools, health, and equitable communities.

We are particularly pleased that the Governor's budget includes numerous measures to reduce the deep and persistent racial disparities that have been holding Wisconsin back. The pandemic and other events of the past year have exposed the depth of those disparities and the need to eliminate them.

In the coming weeks, we will analyze and comment on a number of different portions of the budget, but for now we want to commend the Governor for including many provisions that would help remove barriers that frequently deny families of color and those farthest from opportunity access to the economic ladder providing a better life for themselves, their children, and our communities. Those include:

- Making investments to reduce significant racial disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes, address social determinants of health, and to combat lead poisoning;
- Expanding BadgerCare to improve access to health care for low-wage Wisconsinites and making health insurance more affordable;
- Providing a large and long overdue increase in general equalization aid for public schools, as well as targeted increases for special education, rural schools, and education of English learners;
- Making significant reforms in the corrections system, including returning 17-year-olds to the juvenile justice system;
- Investing in a more equitable future, by providing much-needed increases in child care and early education funding;
- Removing barriers to work and community involvement by allowing all people, regardless of their immigration status, to obtain driver licenses;

- Putting more money into the pockets of Wisconsin residents with low incomes, by increasing targeted income tax and property tax credits; and
- Directing state agencies to determine how current government policies and practices impact people of color and individuals with disabilities.

We also applaud the Governor for proposing to close a couple of significant tax loopholes in order to create a more level playing field for Wisconsin families and businesses, and to generate revenue to make needed investments in education, health care, and infrastructure.

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Kids Forward, formerly the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, advocates for effective, long-lasting solutions that break down barriers to success for children and families in Wisconsin. Using research and a community-informed approach, Kids Forward works to help every kid, every family, and every community thrive.