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For Immediate Release

Kids Forward Praises the Governor's Efforts to Expand Access to Health Insurance by Expanding BadgerCare

The following is a statement from Michele Mackey, Chief Executive Officer of Kids Forward, regarding Governor Evers' budget proposals for increasing access and affordability of health insurance through BadgerCare expansion:

Kids Forward praises Governor Evers' plans to increase crucial investments in access to mental health and substance use disorder treatment and to make health insurance more affordable for Wisconsinites working hard to make ends meet. BadgerCare helps provide over one million Wisconsinites access to affordable, quality healthcare, but hundreds of thousands of folks remain uninsured.

Affordable health insurance and access to mental health care is more important now than ever. The COVID-19 pandemic has left too many uninsured through no fault of their own; Wisconsin's income limits for BadgerCare exclude thousands of families working hard just to get by. Due to long-standing economic and employment discrimination, the burden of being uninsured falls disproportionately on Black, Native American, and Latinx Wisconsinites. Expanding BadgerCare would help confront those inequities in insurance coverage. Failing to meet the health care needs of families trying to make ends meet on near-poverty-level wages traps them in cycles of poverty and health disparities.

The pandemic has shined a painful light on the racism and inequity that plagues our current health system and has underscored the need for everyone to have affordable, quality health care. In addition to providing affordable health insurance for thousands, expanding BadgerCare will increase access to behavioral health care, reduce health disparities, improve health outcomes, and lower premiums on the private health insurance market.

Lastly, Kids Forward is encouraged that the Governor is investing a substantial amount of the \$600M saved over the biennium to bolster Wisconsin's mental and behavioral health treatment providers and infrastructure.

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About Kids Forward Kids Forward 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.



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