



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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Survival Coalition Has Concerns about Governor Walker's Proposed Medicaid Expansion

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(Madison) –The Survival Coalition supports Governor Walker's proposal to reduce the number of uninsured individuals in the state, but has concerns that his proposal announced today will force some people with disabling conditions, who currently use BadgerCare coverage, into private market health care exchanges where there are higher out of pocket costs and reduced coverage.

“Wisconsin continues to protect Medicaid access for people with the most significant disabilities. However, our state has many residents who have chronic conditions like multiple sclerosis, seizure disorders and mental health disorders who need quality medical care, but do not quite meet the steep criteria for Medicaid based upon disability,” said Beth Swedeen, Survival co-chair and Executive Director of the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities.

Swedeen said this creates significant challenges for people with disabilities and chronic conditions who have high medical costs and limited income. Good health care helps these individuals go to work and maintain their health.

“People with low-incomes and medical conditions may not be able to afford care or will only have the choice of the most basic, inadequate health plans, that do not cover medications or treatment required for complex medical issues,” said Maureen Ryan, Survival Coalition co-chair and Executive Director of the Wisconsin Coalition for Independent Living Centers.

“We hope the legislature will look at this more closely, see what is both the best option for Wisconsin taxpayers as well as what is best for the health of people with chronic conditions.

Wisconsin has an opportunity to receive federal funds to reimburse 100% of the costs through 2017, and with rates subsequently declining to 90% in 2020. If a state covers the expansion

group, it is allowed to discontinue the coverage at a later time – states are not locked into this from year to year.

“If you ask a person who needs this coverage if they would rather have it for just a few years, even if it may be unavailable at a later time, they would choose it. Medicaid expansion is a win-win: it increases both health care access and a net gain of over \$4B for Wisconsin’s economy,” Ryan said.

She added that a particular concern by Survival Coalition is that the prescription drug coverage in the private exchange may be inadequate for many people. Another concern is increased out of pocket costs, which can put families in the position of choosing medicine or other basics, such as food or rent.

Although the details are not yet available, it appears that this proposal will allow some childless adults to enroll in the BadgerCare Core Plan. Survival Coalition members are concerned that Core coverage is limited and may not meet the needs of many people with disabilities and chronic conditions. In comparison, the plan for the Medicaid expansion would have offered a more comprehensive essential health benefits package which would have supported individuals.

Specifically the Core Plan offers significantly limited mental health and prescription drug coverage as compared to what would be available to people with chronic conditions in a Medicaid expansion plan.

The Survival co-chairs agreed that Medicaid expansion, with its focus on evidence-based preventative care, would be the best option for people with disabilities and chronic conditions in the state. Although the Governor’s commitment to additional funding for mental health services is key, people who are not already receiving quality primary care will continue to be lost in the system and may not access less costly preventative measures before their mental health issues become more serious.

The Survival Coalition will continue to work with the Governor and the Department of Health Services to ensure that Wisconsin residents with disabling conditions have access to affordable, adequate health care.

Survival Coalition is comprised of more than 30 statewide disability organizations that advocate and support policies and practices that lead to the full inclusion, participation, and contribution of people living with disability.

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