



May 11, 2017

Linda Seemeyer, Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
1 West Wilson Street
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Secretary Seemeyer,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the BadgerCare Reform Demonstration Project proposed amendment (“the amendment”). I am Rabbi Bonnie Margulis, President of Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice. We are a state-wide, interfaith organization advocating for social and economic justice for all Wisconsinites. As people of faith, we believe that affordable, comprehensive health care is a right that all people deserve, regardless of income.

Unfortunately, the proposed changes to BadgerCare will render health care less accessible and less affordable to the low-income families who depend on it for their coverage. It is unconscionable to require people with incomes as low as 20% above the poverty line to pay a premium. An amount of \$1 to \$10 dollars a month may sound like a trivial amount, but for people living on the edge, it is an enormous burden. Further, people at such low levels of income have no access to bank services, credit cards, or checkbooks. This makes it extremely difficult to make these kinds of payments, putting low- and very low-income families at great risk for losing coverage.

Imposing work requirements at the risk of losing eligibility flies in the face of the purpose and goal of Medicaid – to provide care for those unable to provide for themselves. Most Medicaid recipients who are able to work, do so. Those who do not, report that they are unable to work due to disabilities, responsibilities to care for family members, or because they are in school. Imposing harsh work requirements will do nothing to make these populations any more able to work, but will lose them health care they need.

Enacting drug testing requirements will do nothing to address the serious issue of drug addiction, but will instead cut off access to care for those who need it to address their addictions. The reality is, when drug testing has been imposed in other states as a requirement for benefits, the cost of the drug testing vastly outweighed the very small number of drug users that were identified (Bryce Covert, “What 7 States Discovered After Spending More Than \$1 Million Drug Testing Welfare Recipients,” Think Progress, February 2015.). Far better would be to use those funds to increase access to drug treatment programs for those who need them.

For all these reasons, Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice strongly opposes these measures which would only result in thousands of Wisconsinites losing access to needed care. Please focus your efforts instead on finding ways to improve access to care for those most vulnerable among us.

Rabbi Bonnie Margulis

President

Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice

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