

Nine Years to Get BadgerCare Expansion Done

Written by Jeff Smith, State Senator District 31
Wednesday, 12 April 2023 14:59

<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/healthcare-family-dr-s440.jpg>



Republicans have failed to expand BadgerCare, a move that is supported by over 70% of Wisconsinites. This week, Sen. Smith writes about how expanding BadgerCare brings tax dollars home to provide better health outcomes.

MADISON - Since January of 2014, Wisconsin has had the opportunity to receive BadgerCare expansion funds. This is the ninth year Republicans have buried their heads in the sand, rejecting the \$1.6 billion from the federal government and leaving 90,000 people without the health care they need.

We all wish this was the ninth anniversary of Wisconsin making the decision to do the right thing, but Republicans have continually rejected numerous bills, budget proposals and special sessions to fully expand BadgerCare.

Thanks to the ACA, the federal government has offered to return our own tax dollars back to Wisconsin if we expand BadgerCare, Wisconsin's Medicaid program. Unfortunately, we've had thirteen years to get the job done and we still haven't expanded BadgerCare.

According to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, Wisconsin would have saved [over \\$1 billion](#) in 2021-23 by expanding Medicaid. These savings could've been used to lower prescription drug costs, expand mental health services, improve pregnancy outcomes and more. Wisconsin is

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still being held back by leaders playing politics with people's healthcare.

If our own tax dollars can be returned right back to us, I suspect most people would consider it a no-brainer to accept. According to a 2022 poll, [over 70% of Wisconsinites](#) support BadgerCare expansion. Why should we pay to expand health care access in other states—which is what we're doing now—before addressing our challenges here at home?

Governor Tony Evers' 2023-25 budget includes a proposal to expand BadgerCare in Wisconsin. Doing so would expand healthcare coverage to 89,700 more Wisconsinites while also saving our state \$1.6 billion due to enhanced federal funds. These savings could be reinvested back into new and existing healthcare programs serving residents across the state.

Medicaid ensures that Wisconsin residents have access to preventive and lifesaving healthcare. Current Medicaid programs—including IRIS, Family Care and SeniorCare—are available to help individuals living in poverty, people with disabilities and those who may be ineligible for Medicare. Medicaid provides prescription drug subsidies through SeniorCare. Medicaid helps cover screenings and treatment for breast and cervical cancer for women under the age of sixty-five. BadgerCare expansion would help more Wisconsinites by increasing reimbursements and building greater capacity of existing Medicaid programs.

We have an opportunity right in front of us to cover more Wisconsinites while also saving our state money. This would seem like an easy decision, right? After all, this is about bringing back our federal tax dollars to Wisconsin.



Many politicians seem to believe healthcare is a privilege – as if the quality of care you receive

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should depend on how wealthy you are. Whether you believe healthcare is a right or a privilege, our federal tax dollars are still being sent to other states to pay for their programs when it should be coming back here.

Wisconsin is [one of only ten states](#) that have refused to expand Medicaid. Last month, North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper signed a bipartisan bill expanding Medicaid coverage, leaving Wisconsin in an ever-dwindling minority of states who have not expanded coverage for their citizens yet. We're still paying for other states to expand Medicaid without taking care of residents here in Wisconsin.



We need Medicaid because of our current healthcare system that far too often prioritizes profit over public health. With a broken healthcare system driven by insurance companies and big pharmaceutical corporations, the most humane thing we can do as a society is ensure that all Americans have access to affordable, high-quality health care. BadgerCare expansion ensures we're being smart by returning our dollars to lower the cost of Medicaid programs overall.

We can get this done, right here in Wisconsin. We've had this discussion time and time again. It's time to listen to our constituents and do the right thing by expanding BadgerCare.