

Erpenbach Applauds DHS Change in Health Care Benefits for Incarcerated Individuals

Written by Wisconsin Senate Democrats

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Long-Sought change will help those in need of substance use recovery and treatment.

MADISON - State Senator Jon Erpenbach (D-West Point) applauded an announcement by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services and the Wisconsin Department of Corrections today that beginning on October 24th, they will be implementing a new policy that will suspend health care benefits for individuals enrolled in Medicaid or BadgerCare Plus who become incarcerated, instead of terminating them.



“This issue was brought to my attention nearly five years ago by advocates working with inmates on medication assisted recovery programs in Sauk County, a program that was then called C.A.R.E. This group found that it became difficult to continue successful treatment for the people they worked with once they were released from custody because they lacked access to health insurance,” said Erpenbach. “It was then that we began advocating for a change.”

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The new suspension, instead of termination of benefits process will increase access to health care services immediately upon release from jail or prison. Wisconsin is currently one of only nine states that terminate Medicaid benefits for jailed inmates and one of only eight states that do so for those entering prison.

“I would like to thank Secretary-Designee Palm, Secretary Carr, the Evers Administration and all of the advocates who worked to change this policy,” said Erpenbach. “We know that formerly incarcerated individuals often struggle with physical and mental health complications in addition to substance use disorder and this policy change will most definitely make a difference in the lives of many Wisconsinites.”

It is estimated that nearly 70% of individuals leaving custody are eligible for Medicaid services. This new policy will allow access to much needed health care services while reducing the burden on hospital emergency rooms, community organizations, and free clinics.

You can read more about the new policy [here](#)