



**Wisconsin Alliance for
Women's Health**

www.supportwomenshealth.org

To: Members of the Joint Finance Committee
From: Sara Finger, Executive Director
Re: Oppose Special Session Senate Bill 11
Date: February 15, 2011

As Wisconsin's Women's Health Policy leader, I'm submitting this testimony on behalf of the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) and for the millions of women and girls throughout the State who are not being given the opportunity to speak out against the so-called Budget Repair Bill.

This so-called budget repair bill offers a stunning power grab first by removing collective bargaining rights from working families and now a proposed take over of our state's largest health care program. If this fast-tracked bill passes this week, one person will have the power to eliminate family planning health care services and the ability for thousands of individuals to access Badgercare without going through the legislative process.

What is being proposed by Special Session Senate Bill 11 is the first step to ending BadgerCare and BadgerCare Family Planning services as we know it in Wisconsin. BadgerCare, Wisconsin's Medicaid program, has been an incredibly successful, nationally-recognized program allowing more than 750,000 working families throughout the State to purchase quality, affordable health insurance. The BadgerCare Family Planning program was created in 1997 by Governor Tommy Thompson to combat Wisconsin's skyrocketing teen birth rate. During the life of the program, it has saved our state over \$700 million.

At a time when Wisconsinites are losing employer-sponsored health insurance at a rapid rate, we cannot afford to have anyone playing politics with the future of this critical health care program. Health care should never be a partisan issue and BadgerCare has always enjoyed strong bi-partisan support. SS SB11 insults the integrity of this important program and puts the health of hundreds of thousands of families at risk.

SS SB11 poses a grave threat to BadgerCare and the BadgerCare Family Planning Program. It is a sweeping change to existing law and eliminates legislative oversight to one of the state's most important sectors of the economy - health care. These broad changes to existing Wisconsin law put working women and their families at risk.

As advocates for all women in Wisconsin, we support legislation that allows women and families the opportunity to be their healthiest. Unfortunately, since 2008, 2.3 million women of reproductive age have lost employee-sponsored health insurance. These tough economic times are precisely when we should be investing in cost-effective programs that help people weather the storm.

In 2008 alone, the BadgerCare Family Planning Program saved over \$140 million and prevented over 11,000 unintended pregnancies. In addition to addressing unintended pregnancies, this program also provides over 55,000 patients with reproductive cancer screenings, STI testing and treatment and annual well woman exams. Wisconsin women need and deserve access to these basic health care services.

BadgerCare has been a shining accomplishment for our state. Please vote NO on SS SB11 and protect the health of Wisconsin women and families.