



TO: Members, Wisconsin State Legislature
FROM: Gail Sumi, Government Relations Director, American Cancer Society
DATE: February 16, 2011
RE: Budget Repair Bill

The American Cancer Society is committed to ensuring that quality, affordable health care is available to all Wisconsinites. Medical assistance programs play an important role in increasing access to cancer screenings and treatment.

We recognize and appreciate that the state budget deficit necessitates difficult choices. However, we are concerned about the potential impact that the medical assistance provisions in the budget repair bill could have on access to care that is necessary to fight cancer.

We are also concerned with the broad power given to the Department of Health Services (DHS) to make changes to current medical assistance statutes without legislative approval. Current medical assistance provisions were only codified into law after being heard by the public and debated by the full state legislature. Changes to these provisions, now and in the future, should be subject to the same process.

Possible changes that could directly impact the fight against cancer in Wisconsin include:

- Changes to eligibility that result in loss of coverage for working families. Many medical assistance participants may not be offered health insurance by their employer. Some of them may have a pre-existing condition, like cancer, that prevents them from obtaining affordable individual coverage on the private market.
- Any changes to coverage of breast and cervical cancer treatment for low-income, uninsured women diagnosed through Wisconsin's Well Woman Program. This coverage category was created by the legislature in 2001 to provide treatment to women who were previously falling through the cracks. The Well Woman Program can save lives and reduce costs by detecting cancer early, but only if women have access to treatment as well as screening.
- A loss of presumptive eligibility for vulnerable patients. Presumptive eligibility is particularly important for women eligible via the Well Woman Program, and other cancer patients whose treatment may not be able to wait for a long approval process.
- Increases in cost-sharing that discourage preventive care. Excessive out-of-pocket costs discourage people from obtaining preventive care like cancer screenings. Instead, patients wait until they are sick to see a doctor, increasing long-term costs for the treatment of diseases that could have been caught early or prevented.

We urge you to allow full legislative review of all changes to these important programs. Please contact me with any questions at 608.886.3752.