



# CITIZEN ACTION OF WISCONSIN

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## Say Yes to Expanding BadgerCare

Accepting federal Medicaid dollars will expand health care freedom, create jobs, and save money

**The Issue:** One of the most important ways the new health care reform law expands coverage is filling the gaping holes in state Medicaid programs (BadgerCare in Wisconsin) guaranteeing coverage to low income adults. Currently, over 76,000 low income Wisconsinites could gain access to BadgerCare if we accepted the federal funds. However, the U.S. Supreme Court gave states the option of turning down the money. Although a number of conservative Republican governors have said yes to the new Medicaid dollars, Gov. Scott Walker decided in 2013 to reject the money and offer an alternative plan which costs over \$300 million more each budget, and covers fewer people. These individuals are not the poor, they are working Wisconsinites. However, the decision is not final and Wisconsin can accept the money at any time. Governor Tony Evers has pledged to accept the federal Medicaid funds to expand BadgerCare.

**Values Statement:** People who lack access to stable and affordable health coverage do not have a fair shot at the American dream. They face a constant threat of having their lives and careers devastated by health disasters that also become financial disasters. In the 21st Century you do not have the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness if you cannot control your own health care decisions or have the peace of mind of knowing that health care will be there when you need it.

**Belief Statement:** The critical role of government is to step in and fill the gaps when the private market fails to provide equal economic and social opportunity. Accepting the federal Medicaid funds to expand BadgerCare is essential because the health insurance market has failed to provide low-income Wisconsinites with affordable health insurance options, and low-wage jobs are far less likely to include affordable coverage. And doing so becomes a stepping stone for others, as we could then open up BadgerCare to all as a "Public Option". On the other hand, Conservatives who oppose strengthening BadgerCare want to leave Wisconsinites who can't afford essential medical care on their own.

**Narrative:** Siding with right-wing politicians special interests such as the big insurance companies, Scott Walker did everything he can to sabotage health care reform. Governor Evers is seeking to stop this sabotage, but the Legislature wants to continue rejecting of billions in federal Medicaid money, which forces low income Wisconsinites on to health exchanges that were designed for people with higher incomes, is yet another incident of playing politics with the health freedom and security of average Wisconsinites.

### Proof Points:

- Walker's decision to not expand BadgerCare has meant Wisconsin has already missed out on over \$1.1 billion in federal funds returning to our state ([Legislative Fiscal Bureau](#))

- If Wisconsin accepts the federal funds it will extend BadgerCare to **over 76,000 Wisconsinites** who currently fall through the cracks.
- The Medicaid (BadgerCare) provisions of the national health care reform law guarantee coverage to all citizens below 138% of the federal poverty level--\$16,753 in annual income (\$8.21 per hour) for a single individual and \$22,715 (\$11.13 per hour) for couples. ([Federal Poverty Line, Families USA](#)). In Wisconsin, this means that those just over the federal poverty line (100% FPL) to this 133% level - working Wisconsinites, not the poor - would gain access to BadgerCare as they should have.
- These workers include homecare workers, nurses' aides, childcare workers, construction workers, office workers, office staff, cashiers, janitors and more. Jobs that often do not offer health coverage.
- This massive investment also creates jobs. According to an analysis by Citizen Action of Wisconsin and [Families USA](#), the billions in federal funds for BadgerCare will create a net of 10,500 new jobs.
- Walker's method of covering some Wisconsinites under the poverty line in BadgerCare using state dollars has been extremely expensive. If Wisconsin were to accept the federal funds for BadgerCare, we could cover those same residents using federal dollars, and [create ~\\$200 million per year in savings in the state budget](#). Savings that could be used to improve healthcare, help our schools, fix our roads etc.
- Research shows that private health insurance premiums for people who never would have been covered by Medicaid expansion still benefit. In states that have accepted the federal Medicaid funds, [private health insurance premiums have been 7-10% lower](#). This is because those denied Medicaid are less likely to get private coverage unless they know they need it, ie are sicker.
- Accepting the available federal funds for BadgerCare would be an important first step to achieving healthcare for all. **We could open up BadgerCare for all as a "Public Option"**, both for individuals and employees of large or small businesses, no matter where they live or what their income is. BadgerCare costs less per person than private insurance, and offers more comprehensive care accepted by medical professionals in all of Wisconsin's 72 counties.
- Wisconsin hospitals would lose out on revenues as uninsured individuals continue to acquire ER bills and uncompensated costs, costs that would have been covered by BadgerCare. Hospitals will lose out on \$3.7 billion in revenue over the next 10 years ([Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#)).
- [Over 240 Wisconsin organizations that have taken a public stance on this issue: link](#)
- In 2014, 20 municipalities held advisory referendums on the question of whether Wisconsin should accept the federal funds for BadgerCare. **Over 1 million Wisconsinites voted, with 73% saying YES to accepting the federal funds.** Those municipalities: Bayfield Co (76% yes), Chippewa Co (61%), Clark Co (58%), Dane Co (82%), Douglas Co (79%), Dunn Co (64%), Eau Claire Co (64%), Florence Co (64%), Iron Co (70%), Jefferson Co (62%), Kenosha, City of (77%), La Crosse Co (71%), Lincoln Co (67%), Milwaukee Co (76%), Oneida Co (69%), Outagamie Co (61%), Portage Co (72%), Rock Co (65%), St Croix Co (70%), and Wood Co (70%).