



DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS
JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

January 17, 2017

Secretary Linda Seemeyer
Wisconsin Department of Health Services
1 West Wilson Street
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Secretary Seemeyer:

We are writing in response to the department's report to the Joint Committee on Finance regarding the overall condition of the Medicaid benefits budget.

In the report, you state that the department's Medicaid projections assume that Congress will reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) through the remainder of the biennium. Wisconsin uses federal CHIP funds to provide health insurance coverage to children enrolled in the BadgerCare Plus program, who totaled more than 171,000 in fiscal year 2016. These are children who, through no fault of their own, would fall through the cracks if this vital coverage were not available to them.

Congress passed a short-term extension of the CHIP program in December, but the funding will expire in March if no further action is taken. Failure to authorize CHIP will cause nearly two million children to lose their health insurance coverage overnight. And yet, when faced with an impending government shutdown, Republican congressional leaders chose to prioritize massive tax breaks for billionaires over the health of low-income kids. We are not confident that those priorities will change in March.

Given your confidence in the department's Medicaid projections, we hope you will answer the following questions as soon as possible as there will be a significant impact on the state's Medicaid budget should Congress and the President fail to act. Have you spoken with Congressional leaders, including Speaker Paul Ryan, about the urgent need for a long-term CHIP funding plan? If so, have you received reassurances that there will be no lapses in funding or coverage? Will you commit to funding CHIP with state dollars going forward without cuts to programs and services?

We appreciate your attention to our questions and look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

Sen. Lena Taylor
4th Senate District

Sen. Jon Epenbach
27th Senate District

Rep. Chris Taylor
76th Assembly District

Rep. Katrina Shankland
71st Assembly District