



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

February 24, 2017

Wisconsin Congressional Delegation
United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20004

The Honorable Members of the Wisconsin Congressional Delegation,

In Wisconsin, we are proud of our innovative healthcare system. Not only is our state known for its high quality of care, but we are known for our unyielding commitment to providing care to all of Wisconsin's citizens. In fact, prior to the passage of Obamacare, Wisconsin had one of the lowest uninsured rates in the country and provided Medicaid coverage to over 1 million Wisconsin residents. However, under the policies of the Obama Administration, our innovative, Wisconsin-focused approach to expanding coverage was penalized.

In 2012, President Obama presented Wisconsin with the false choice of either expanding Medicaid or forgoing roughly \$280 million per year. We co-chaired the state's budget committee when Governor Walker proposed striking our own path and making Wisconsin's Medicaid program a safety net for those in greatest need. We expanded access to all citizens living "in poverty" by lifting a 2009 Medicaid enrollment cap on individuals earning below 100% of the FPL.

Our innovative approach has worked. Today, we have the seventh lowest uninsured rate in the country and a lower uninsured rate than 25 of the 31 states that took Obamacare Medicaid expansion. We expanded our Medicaid safety net to cover all those living in poverty and provided coverage to more people than nine states that took the expansion.

Wisconsin's innovative approach was not rewarded by the Obama Administration. Despite adding approximately 130,000 individuals in poverty to Medicaid, Wisconsin's approach was classified as a "partial expansion." While other states receive full federal funding for their Medicaid expansion, Wisconsin receives no additional funding. In fact, Wisconsin taxpayers had already paid to support our state's Medicaid fund, and during the Obama Administration, they were asked to pay for the expansion in other states.

You have an opportunity to correct this flawed decision by the Obama Administration. As you begin to discuss Medicaid block grants and per-capita limits, we ask that you take a serious look at the inequity in Medicaid funding. We are asking that you once again stand up for Wisconsin and insist that we are treated fairly by receiving the same level of Medicaid funding that other expansion states receive going forward. This inequity should be addressed immediately, not phased in over years. While we very much support greater flexibility for states in designing and administering their Medicaid programs, more flexibility is not a substitute for funding equity.

We agree with Governor Walker's spokesperson who stated in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* that the Governor, "...wants to ensure that the states that were fiscally responsible won't be punished for going that route." Wisconsin taxpayers should no longer be penalized for choosing the responsible path and assuring that all those in poverty have access to healthcare. We have done our part in Madison; now we need you to be our advocates in Washington, D.C. We appreciate your continued partnership on Medicaid reform and look forward to working with you to achieve this principled policy during the 115th United States Congress.

Sincerely,

Senator Alberta Darling
Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Finance

Representative John Nygren
Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Finance

CC:

The Honorable Ron Johnson

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin

The Honorable Paul Ryan

The Honorable Mark Pocan

The Honorable Ron Kind

The Honorable Gwen Moore

The Honorable Jim Sensenbrenner

The Honorable Glenn Grothman

The Honorable Sean Duffy

The Honorable Mike Gallagher