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Wisconsin Farmers Union voices support for Special Session on BadgerCare, Economic Recovery

CHIPPEWA FALLS – Wisconsin Farmers Union supports today’s announcement of a special session on BadgerCare expansion and economic recovery. In a [statement](#) this morning, Governor Tony Evers called upon the Wisconsin State Legislature to take up [LRB-3568](#) at noon next Tuesday, May 25.

“Expanding access to health care should be an obvious choice,” said Wisconsin Farmers Union President Darin Von Ruden, a dairy farmer from Westby. “Decisions made around health care have a real-life impact on Wisconsin families. It’s time to set politics aside and pull together around plans to improve health care access and foster economic recovery.”

Expansion of BadgerCare is especially critical to rural residents, Von Ruden stressed, noting that many farmers are self-employed and struggle to access affordable health care.

“Accepting the federal funds that are available to Wisconsin will allow us to focus funding on other much-needed priorities in the state budget, including economic development and recovery efforts,” said WFU Government Relations Director Nick Levendofsky. “This would be a ‘shot in the arm’ to Wisconsin’s economy and a real benefit to both rural and urban parts of the state.”

Accepting the additional funding would help Wisconsin realize an estimated cost savings of \$1.6 billion. The move would benefit an estimated 90,000 Wisconsinites, extending coverage to those who fall between 100 and 138 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.

Such an investment could prove critical in rural Wisconsin, where some communities face a shortage of health professionals and a rise in substance abuse and mental health concerns.

“Over the last six months, our organizers and volunteers had hundreds of conversations with people in rural communities across the state about expanding Badgercare,” said WFU Organizing Director Bill Hogseth. “We took the time to listen to working people about how hard it can be to pay the bills, raise a family, and cover the costs of insurance premiums. We heard very clearly that no matter their differences, everyone needs health care coverage if they ever get sick or injured. Expanding Badgercare is the right thing to do for rural Wisconsin.”

WFU’s grassroots membership supports creating a public option to buy into BadgerCare, which would be available to any resident of Wisconsin no matter their income. The family farm organization also advocates for the inclusion of the BadgerCare public option on the Healthcare.gov marketplace, allowing Wisconsin residents to apply federal premium subsidies to make health insurance even more affordable.

WFU members have also stressed that the governor, state legislature and Wisconsin Department of Health Services should pursue a Medicaid strategy that leverages all available federal dollars to support Medicaid programs and that recognizes the fluctuating annual income levels that are characteristic of farming and other self-employment.

“Many Wisconsinites can’t afford the coverage they need or are afraid to visit their doctor because of high co-pays and deductibles -- and that’s not right,” Von Ruden said. “Investing in the health of Wisconsin’s citizens is an investment in the future of Wisconsin.”

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