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Senator Jacque Votes No On Secretary-designee Palm

Wisconsin State Senator André Jacque (R-De Pere), a member of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee, released the following statement today regarding his vote against the nomination of Andrea Palm to be Secretary of the Department of Health Services (DHS):

“Secretary-designee Palm and Gov. Evers have well established that they are putting politics before the health of Wisconsinites and have prioritized the diversion of state funding to Wisconsin’s abortion giant Planned Parenthood at the expense of our citizens.

Upon her appointment, Ms. Palm quickly installed Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin’s longtime lobbyist and head of its legal team at the same time Planned Parenthood had just initiated a lawsuit against the state and was under audit by Ms. Palm’s department based on a consistent pattern of overbilling. This lobbyist, Nicole Safar, was billed by Ms. Palm as her “first choice” and “number one draft pick” based on her many years of experience as an executive for an organization repeatedly shown to be wasting taxpayer dollars. **The most recent audit of Planned Parenthood’s records, completed earlier this year, found that Planned Parenthood improperly billed the state for over two thirds of the funding it received through the BadgerCare program (68.8%), over a three year audit period** (See attached audit). Ms. Palm’s decision to make Ms. Safar her second in command clearly has placed many DHS employees in a conflicted position relative to ongoing litigation and enforcement action by the department against Planned Parenthood.

Despite awareness of Planned Parenthood’s persistent misconduct, Palm pushed earlier this year for a department budget request which would have diverted millions of dollars in funding from an array of state and local health department programs toward Planned Parenthood.

It is also very concerning that Ms. Palm maintains that she was not consulted by or has otherwise discussed with Gov. Evers the various marijuana legalization initiatives contained in his budget request and ongoing initiatives, given the considerable concerns and negative impacts such changes have caused elsewhere in hampering children’s brain development and increased onset of youth use, increased drugged driving and other public health and safety concerns, including the myriad of other health problems resulting from use and abuse yet to be fully examined.

Ms. Palm has demonstrated a willingness to put politics before the health of our state and create conflicts of interest within her department that are disqualifying, and so today I voted against her confirmation.”

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