Expanding BadgerCare is the Best Bang for our Buck

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Expanding BadgerCare, as proposed in the budget, would net a $1 billion dollar incentive payment, and a recent Marquette Law Poll shows that 70% of Wisconsin residents approve.

MADISON - Who doesn't love a good deal? It's common for folks in Wisconsin to want to make sure they are getting the best bang for their buck.

So why shouldn't the Wisconsin legislature do the same? For years, Democrats have been pushing to expand BadgerCare because it ensures greater access to affordable, quality coverage, lower premiums and generates millions to be re-invested in programs that benefit all Wisconsinites. More coverage for less, that's a great deal.

It's a deal that just got better under the federal American Rescue Plan Act. Under this plan, if Wisconsin were to expand BadgerCare – as proposed in the Governor's budget – Wisconsin would receive an additional billion dollar incentive payment.

Yes, you read that correctly. ONE BILLION DOLLARS. That's in addition to the $634 million dollars of general purpose revenue Wisconsin would save and the 1.3 billion federal dollars we would leverage.

For those of you concerned about those big numbers and what that means for Wisconsin's bottom line, it's important to remember that Wisconsin would not save any money by choosing not to participate. Instead our tax dollars would go to other states that DO choose to participate. We are only one of twelve states that don't.

If we have learned anything from the last year it's the importance of access to affordable and quality healthcare. And once again, Gov. Evers is prioritizing healthcare for Wisconsinites by introducing a budget that makes critical investments in health services while also expanding BadgerCare.



We're now a full year into the COVID-19 pandemic and the stakes couldn't be higher for our state's ability to bounce back. The only thing standing between our state and over a billion dollars are legislative Republicans dead set on sticking it to the Governor.

During the last budget Republicans foolishly rejected BadgerCare expansion and there is absolutely no reason to make the same mistake again. Especially when there is even more money on the line.

There is no way to refute the fact that BadgerCare expansion is good for our state. States that

have expanded their own programs saw positive impacts on their economies including: lower premiums, an increase in providers in rural areas, reductions in medical debt, reductions in infant mortality rates, and better reimbursements rates that helps attract and retain medical professionals.

More importantly it's what you, the people of Wisconsin, want! The most recent Marquette Law Poll shows that 70% of Wisconsin residents approve of expanding BadgerCare.

It is the fiscally smart thing to do and the best deal for Wisconsin. To reject it would be a costly missed opportunity. Republicans have their second chance, and we should all be putting pressure on them to do what is right.

Jon Erpenbach represents the 27th Senate District which covers Sauk, Dane, Iowa, Columbia and Green County.

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