

What will happen to Wisconsin women if the ACA is repealed?

By the time you finish this paragraph, a new case of breast cancer will be diagnosed. In the United States, a woman will be diagnosed with breast cancer every two minutes. Lawmakers need to remember that access to preventative healthcare isn't just about cost, it's a life and death decision.

For women with little or no access to insurance, the Wisconsin Well Woman Program is supposed to provide cervical and breast cancer screenings at no costs to women aged 45 to 64. But women in Wisconsin are vulnerable, because the 2015 restructuring of the Wisconsin Well Woman Program, and now attacks on the Affordable Care Act have left women out in the cold.

When the Wisconsin Department of Health Services proposed restructuring the Wisconsin Well Woman Program in 2013, one of the common justifications was that other programs such as the ACA could care of the women who might find themselves needing care after the number of coordinators and providers dropped drastically. The number of WWWP dropped from 72 to 13 coordinators who would run "Multi Jurisdictional Agencies". The Department of Health Services has noted a decrease in use since 2015, but says women are still being served because alternatives are available.

While both BadgerCare and the Affordable Care Act were discussed as alternatives to the WWWP, the premiums under the ACA are often cost prohibitive to women who are eligible for the WWWP. This is because Wisconsin did not accept the federal Medicaid expansion funds, which would have covered many women who struggle to pay for premiums. In short, lower-income Wisconsin women are more vulnerable to breast cancer and other illnesses because the Well Woman Program was downsized while federal Medicaid dollars were rejected, and a Wisconsin Exchange for Healthcare.gov, which has reduced premiums in other states, was not created.

With the potential repeal of the Affordable Care Act, woman who had to transition away from the WWWP may get lost in the shuffle, and find themselves without access to life-saving screenings from any healthcare system. The Wisconsin Breast Cancer Coalition's mission is to halt the alarming rate of breast cancer mortality in Wisconsin; without access to preventative care, this is simply not possible.

For people who would be impacted by the repeal of the Affordable Care Act, now is this time to stand up and speak out in support. Go to wibreastcancer.org/legislation/find-my-representative/ to find your federal representatives and contact them to express your support of the Affordable Care Act.

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