

TO: Wisconsin State Legislators
FROM: Sara Finger, Executive Director, Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health
Dawn Anderson, Executive Director, Wisconsin Breast Cancer Coalition
RE: Changes to the Wisconsin Well Woman Program Should be Delayed
Date: March 31, 2015

The Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH), the Wisconsin Breast Cancer Coalition (WBCC), and other advocates throughout the state are once again expressing their concern over the severity of the proposed changes to the Wisconsin Well Woman Program including the tight implementation timeline, many remaining questions regarding network adequacy under the new plan, and the extensive lack of data regarding whether the changes to program are feasible. A copy of a letter sent to the Department of Health Services State Health Officer Karen McKeown on March 26, 2015 can be found attached. Please note that on March 30th, Karen McKeown did respond to our communication and indicated that they would not be delaying their plans at this time.

In December of 2013, the Department of Health Services (DHS) first shared a proposal to drastically restructure the program that has provided cervical and breast cancer screenings to over 70,000 women over the past 20 years. This proposal included an enormous reduction in the number of Local Coordinating Agencies – 72 to just a handful – and a significant reduction in the number of health care providers in the program.

In response to many providers, advocates and patients who then expressed frustration that they were denied the opportunity to provide input prior to the proposal being released at the end of 2013, DHS announced it was halting its original proposal and was willing to sit down with WAWH, WBCC and others to more collaboratively discuss ways to improve the program and help the program compliment new health care coverage options available through the Affordable Care Act.

Despite the feedback DHS has received from stakeholders, the Department has failed to provide any information related to health care coverage options for current WWWP clients. In addition, DHS has not indicated how the program will absorb an influx of new patients if Governor Walker's proposed new changes to BadgerCare are implemented and/or the pending Supreme Court case *King vs. Burwell* strikes down federal subsidies those purchasing health insurance plans on the federal Marketplace.

The state's original justification for making changes to the Well Woman Program was based on expanded coverage options in the Federal Marketplace and BadgerCare, but these coverage options are now in danger depending on what happens with the State Budget and the Supreme Court. We are very concerned that we soon may see Wisconsin women flocking back to programs like this that have served them in the past.

With so much uncertainty, we are urging DHS to delay the implementation of new changes and to take the time to truly understand the current and future needs among Wisconsin women for these critical services.

For more information on the proposed changes to the Wisconsin Well Woman Program, please visit: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wwwwp/model.htm>. We encourage you as state legislators to exercise oversight of this critical program that provides life-saving services to women in your communities. Despite a State Budget proposal that provides flat funding for the program, these programmatic changes behind the scenes will undermine what has to date been a tremendously successful program.