



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Walker Administration Terminates Well Woman Contract NE WISCONSIN LEGISLATORS CALL FOR RENEWAL OF LIFE-SAVING WELL WOMAN CONTRACT

MENASHA— State Representative Gordon Hintz (D-Oshkosh) and State Representative Penny Bernard Schaber (D-Appleton) joined county health officials, Well Woman Program caseworkers, and patients currently served by the program at the Fox Cities Community Health Center to question the Walker Administration's last minute decision to terminate contracts for caseworkers that administer an important cancer screening program.

Since 1995, Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin has coordinated the Well Woman program in Winnebago, Fond du Lac, Outagamie, and Sheboygan counties. The \$138,000 coordinator contract is paid by the state to fund two caseworkers who enroll and facilitate Well Woman program services. Last year, these two individuals served over 1260 women in the four counties, facilitating 500 breast cancer screenings and 244 cervical cancer screenings.

"It is difficult to imagine someone in charge of health services for the state of Wisconsin being any more reckless and irresponsible with women's health services than what we are witnessing from Secretary Smith," said Rep. Hintz. "When decisions regarding cancer screenings for women without health insurance come a distant second to some misguided ideological social agenda, everyone in Wisconsin should be concerned."

"I am deeply concerned about the possibility that DHS will not renew the Well Woman program contract with Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin in Fond du Lac and Winnebago Counties," said Sen. King. "These vital cancer screening and care support services cannot be easily moved to another provider. With only two weeks until the end of the year I worry that the women currently receiving care management will have nowhere to turn."

"Early detection and treatment are the most reliable ways to prevent deaths from cancer," said Rep. Bernard Schaber. "Shutting down the funding for screenings will put my constituents' lives at risk, and that is not acceptable."

Although the federal funds which reimburse testing costs have not yet been impacted, DHS abruptly notified Planned Parenthood by phone on December 1 that the coordinator contracts would expire on January 1 and not be renewed. Terminating the coordinator contract will effectively eliminate the access point for low-income women to enroll and set up appointments. DHS has not yet responded with how they plan to move forward in the next two weeks to assure the women in these counties will continue to access diagnostic testing and treatment without coordinators after January 1.

The Department of Health Services (DHS) made no attempt to notify the impacted county health agencies of the decision to not renew the contract. These four county health departments have not provided or managed Well Woman Program services and currently have no capacity or plan to offer them. On December 13, Senator King and Representatives Hintz and Bernard Schaber sent a letter to the DHS Secretary Dennis Smith asking for an explanation and calling for renewal of the existing contract.

Secretary Smith responded with a brief letter on December 14 thanking the legislators for sharing their views. However, Smith did not address any of the questions raised in the legislators' initial correspondence regarding the reasoning behind his last minute decision or how the program would be implemented in the future. Although Smith stated in his letter that Well Woman services would be maintained, the assurance conflicts with DHS employees' repeated statements to Planned Parenthood and county officials that the contract would not be renewed.

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