

Without Action, Healthcare Costs Will Rise

By: Senator Brad Pfaff (D-La Crosse)

As of this writing, the federal government is shut down because Congress and the White House are refusing to make healthcare more affordable. This is deeply troubling. Without federal action, working people are all but guaranteed to see their health insurance premiums skyrocket, especially those who purchase insurance through the marketplace.

The sticking point in Washington, DC, is the nonrenewal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) premium subsidies, enhanced in 2021 by Congressional Democrats to make health insurance more affordable for more people who receive coverage through the marketplace. In Wisconsin, these tax credits saved 270,000 people \$585 each month on average.

Washington's inaction impacts those who purchase health care coverage through the marketplace: small business owners, young adults, early retirees between the ages of 60-65, and those who are independently employed—farmers, truck drivers, and landscapers—middle-class workers who make too much to qualify for our state's Medicaid program, BadgerCare. Almost half of adults with coverage through the ACA Marketplace are small business owners, employees of small businesses, or self-employed individuals.

ACA Marketplace subsidies are set to expire at the end of this year, December 31, 2025, which is expected to result in approximately four million people losing coverage and increased costs for an additional 20 million people. Out-of-pocket premiums for those 20 million insured through the ACA Marketplace are predicted to rise by 75%. Let me say that again: premiums would increase by 75%. Health insurance is already too expensive! These increases would make it even more out of reach for middle-class people.

Ending these health care subsidies will do nothing but increase prices for hardworking Americans. People are already feeling the pain of inflation and tariffs, and a massive increase in healthcare costs is the last thing we need.

Congress needs to act with the same urgency it acted with when it gave a massive tax kickback to the wealthy and well-connected few earlier this year. Working people in Wisconsin simply cannot afford for their healthcare costs to go up. At the very least, the federal government must take action to extend these healthcare subsidies, helping to keep out-of-pocket costs down and people insured.