

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** May 31, 2023

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## **Broad Coalition Urges Governor to Stand with Families and Veto Restrictions on Public Supports**

26 Wisconsin groups called on Governor Evers to veto bills that could reduce access to health care and unemployment insurance benefits for thousands of Wisconsin families.

"The package of bills rushed through the Assembly scapegoats low-wage Wisconsinites who are fighting to take care of themselves and their families," stated Truth Freemyn, 9to5 Wisconsin associate director, "These bills will create more barriers to work and worsen racial disparities."

Public assistance programs, such as Medicaid, FoodShare, and unemployment insurance, are important work supports—particularly for workers of color who are more likely to [face barriers to work](#) and [racism in employment](#), leading to low-wage jobs and job loss. If state policymakers want to further support workers, they need to address the real factors that make it difficult and sometimes impossible for workers across the state to get or keep jobs, like access to affordable child care, paid family and medical leave, adequate wages, affordable housing, and transportation.

A broad spectrum of groups signed on to a letter, including organizations representing small businesses, workers, Black and Brown youth organizers and advocates, community health centers and faith leaders. The signers also include advocates for children, low-income earners, people with disabilities, and victims of domestic violence.

"Even though most of the people participating in public assistance programs in Wisconsin are white, long and persistent structural racism means that these restrictions disproportionately affect people of color," stated William Parke-Sutherland, senior health policy analyst at Kids Forward.

There are far more effective ways of increasing workforce participation without harming low-income families. Shawn Phetteplace, interim organizing and policy director of Main Street Alliance, said, "If state policymakers truly want to increase workforce participation they need to address the real factors that make it difficult for people to get or keep jobs, for example acute shortages of affordable child care and housing; accessible, affordable transportation; the long-frozen minimum wage; and lack of access to family and medical leave."

One of the bills that was approved by the Assembly would leave many Wisconsinites without access to affordable health care. AB 148 would require people to renew their BadgerCare coverage twice as often and dramatically increase red tape. It would require people covered by BadgerCare to

submit twice as much paperwork in order to renew their coverage and punish them for not reporting changed circumstances almost immediately.

Another bill would sharply reduce the maximum number of weeks of unemployment insurance that laid-off workers can receive, despite the fact that the number of recipients of these insurance benefits is already far lower than in any of the last 15 years. If the very restrictive criteria in AB 153 had been in place for the past 39 years, the usual ceiling of 26 weeks would have only been in place 2.3 percent of that time. A report by the National Employment Law Project<sup>1</sup> explains that slashing the length of UI benefits disproportionately hurts people of color.

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<sup>1</sup> Nzingha Hooker and Alexa Tapia, *Slashing Unemployment Benefit Weeks Based on Jobless Rates Hurts Workers of Color*, National Employment Law Project, May 2021, <https://s27147.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/UI-Indexing-Policy-Brief-05-14-2021.pdf>.