



---

## Planned Parenthood Advocates of Wisconsin

**TO:** Representative Sanfelippo, Representative Bernier, Representative Edming, Representative Skowronski, Representative Kremer, Representative Wichgers, Representative Murphy, Representative Jacque, Representative Kolste, Representative Zamarripa, Representative Subeck, Representative C. Taylor

**DATE:** April 19, 2017

**MEMO:** AB 128

---

### **Assembly Bill 128 would eliminate health insurance coverage for abortion services in state employee plans that are purchased using the employee's own hard-earned dollars.**

State and local government employees earn health care benefits as part of their compensation just like many Wisconsinites. This health coverage, like other plans in the private market, includes maternity coverage that covers therapeutic abortion services for women facing a medically indicated pregnancy termination.

The very concept of insurance is to provide relief in situations that we don't anticipate. No woman plans for her pregnancy to go horribly wrong. No woman plans to develop severe preeclampsia or dangerous blood clots during pregnancy. No woman plans for her baby to be diagnosed with a fatal fetal anomaly. No woman plans to become pregnant as the result of an assault. Coverage for these unplanned and incredibly difficult situations is exactly why we buy insurance in the first place. This bill takes away that level of security that in an untenable situation the health care services a woman needs won't result in significant financial burdens.

One thing is clear, state and federal law prohibit the use of taxpayer funds for abortion services in Wisconsin except in very limited circumstances: when a woman will die without an abortion; for victims of rape and incest who have reported the assault to police; and when continuing a pregnancy will have a severe and permanent debilitating impact on a woman's health. See Wisconsin Statutes § 20.9275.

Assembly Bill 128 goes much farther, taking away existing health insurance coverage for state and local government. Employees earn their health insurance coverage just like they earn their paychecks. These are personal, and not government funds. This is settled law in the state of Wisconsin, as reflected in an Attorney General Letter from as long ago as 1995. Just because employees work for the state or local government, it does not make their benefits, or their paychecks, "public funds" that cannot be spent on abortion care.

Currently the Government Insurance Board (GIB), which contracts with health companies to provide employee health plans, allows insurance companies to decide what services their plans cover and allows consumers to choose the plans they prefer. Assembly bill 128 prohibits the GIB from offering plans with complete maternity coverage that includes medically necessary abortion services. The GIB is not even permitted to renew existing contracts with insurance companies that offer coverage for abortion services that fall outside of the very strict limitations of Wis. Stat. § 20.927. **This bill takes away an employee's opportunity to purchase insurance coverage that meets her individual needs and is government at its worst: politicians inserting themselves between Wisconsinites and their healthcare for no other reason than to score political points.**



## Planned Parenthood Advocates of Wisconsin

**Instead of providing broader access to maternity coverage, Assembly Bill 128 will take away health care benefits for women when they need it most.**

Under this bill, a woman would be forced to report sexual assault to the police, regardless of her personal situation, to get insurance coverage for abortion services that she decides is the best option for her.

As consumers, we buy health insurance to protect from the unexpected. And we rely on that insurance to be there for us if we experience unanticipated health conditions. For many women and families who currently have insurance, the effects of this ban will not be felt until coverage is needed and simply not there. Women do not plan for the circumstances where they may need abortion care. These women and families rely on health insurance to cover their medical bills and the state legislature has no business standing in their way.

If the state legislature is serious about reducing the need for abortion in Wisconsin, we invite them to work with Planned Parenthood and other community providers to increase access to the essential preventative healthcare that helps women avoid unintended pregnancies and carry health pregnancies to term. We need to increase access to healthcare, not limit it for political gain. It is time for us to work together and ensure that all men and women have access to basic reproductive health care services, regardless of their employer or insurance company.

###