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Significant Sacrifice, Little Sharing **Governor's Budget Proposal Would Fall Heavily on Children and Families**

Much of the rhetoric leading up to the introduction of Gov. Walker's budget proposal centered on the themes of shared sacrifice, opportunity, and working together to solve the state's budget challenges. The budget proposal itself reflects a very different set of priorities. There is plenty of sacrifice in the Governor's budget, but little sharing. We see a proposal that places the burden disproportionately on children and working families. We see massive cuts in the very kinds of public investments that create and expand economic opportunity. And the proposed budget sets up ongoing conflicts between local units of government and public employees—conflicts that would shift the focus of the debate even further away from the well-being of kids.

Polls show that a strong majority of Wisconsinites believe in a balanced approach to the state budget that includes both spending cuts and increased revenue. However, the Governor's budget proposal is far from balanced. It includes massive cuts to investments in our human infrastructure that the people of Wisconsin have long supported; and it not only fails to offset these cuts with new sources of revenue, it actually weakens the state's revenue base with additional new tax breaks.

The budget proposal represents a dramatic de-investment in children and working families in many ways. Here are just a few examples:

- Families who depend on child care subsidies to maintain employment will likely face higher copays and waiting lists, and eligibility for the program may be reduced.
- Major cuts in technical college and vocational education will mean fewer opportunities for working parents to improve their skills and credentials in order to earn family-supporting wages.
- Massive cuts to K-12 education will hurt schools across the state, and their impact on school equalization will mean that the poorest districts are hit the hardest.
- \$500 million in cuts to Medicaid programs will be devastating to many of the state's most vulnerable families.
- Struggling families are facing a reduction in the state earned income tax credit, especially for families with two children; elimination of inflationary increases in the homestead tax credit; and a \$20 reduction in W-2 cash benefits (after 15 years of frozen benefits) coupled with reduced opportunity for education and job training.

(more)

- The popular Wisconsin Covenant program that helps students who meet academic goals in high school and attend college in the University of Wisconsin system would be phased out, even though it is largely funded with private dollars.
- Meanwhile, the budget proposal and other legislation already passed during the special session dig the budget hole deeper with some \$200 million in additional tax breaks.
- While the proposal significantly decreases support for public education and services for vulnerable families, it allocates an additional \$350 million for roads. Investing in the state's transportation infrastructure is important, but it needs to be balanced with crucial investments in our human infrastructure.

"The state budget is about priorities. Everybody understands that belt-tightening is necessary, but this budget does not share the sacrifice equitably," said Ken Taylor, executive director of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families. "We urge the Governor and legislators to re-examine what this proposed budget would mean for children and families, and reshape it in a way that genuinely reflects the values of the people of Wisconsin. We know they can do a better job of preserving the things that make this state such a great place to live, work, learn, and grow. The children and families of our state deserve no less."

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