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### **Wisconsin Council on Children and Families Responds Positively to Governor Doyle's Budget**

Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF) responded favorably to Governor Doyle's budget address last night. In particular, WCCF was pleased to see the Governor protected key safety net programs that WCCF's research has shown Wisconsin citizens want prioritized.

"Our efforts leading up to this budget have focused on preservation, preservation, preservation," said Charity Eleson, associate director of advocacy and programs for WCCF. "We fully recognize that in these tough times, there will be little room for expansion of services to children and families around the state, but we also know that there's strong support around the state for maintaining health care for poor children and families, key safety net programs like Emergency Assistance for homeless families, and critical supports for working families, like child care and W-2."

In a survey of 1,000 Wisconsin voters, WCCF found that 85 percent of those polled believed that Wisconsin should ensure access to health insurance for those who can't get coverage through their employer. The survey also found that 65 percent of voters would be less likely to vote for a policy-maker who voted against increasing funding to provide health insurance coverage for low-income families.

"Going into this budget, we have been highly concerned that key safety net programs that help poor working families, like BadgerCare, would be under fire because of the substantial increases in the number of families enrolling in the program," said Eleson. "At the same time, we knew that this program had strong support around the state."

WCCF was also pleased to see that Governor Doyle largely preserved Community Aids, which is the primary source of state funding to counties for the delivery of state mandated child protective services.

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“Community Aids has been a somewhat misunderstood allocation because it has become a source of funding that has had to be all things to all people,” Eleson said. “But we know that it is the lifeline for the county system of child protective services and were pleased to see the Governor’s commitment to largely protect it.”

WCCF will complete its final analysis of the budget within the next several weeks. The Council will then take to the road to do education sessions in 16 communities around the state to help Wisconsin citizens understand the impact of the budget on children and families and their communities.

“This is a huge document with much yet to be discovered, and we’ve got a long process ahead where a lot could change,” said Eleson. “We want to do as much as we can throughout the next several months to help citizens throughout this state understand the biennial budget’s implications for the health and well-being of children and families.”