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***New Data Demonstrates Investments Made in Health Insurance Paying Off:
Wisconsin is Close to Ensuring Health Coverage for All Children***

Madison – U.S. Census Bureau Data released today revealed that the number of Wisconsin’s children without health insurance continues to decline, though 81,000 Wisconsin kids still lack health insurance. Both the State Legislature’s Budget Conference Committee and Congress have measures before them to increase health insurance coverage of Wisconsin’s children.

“These numbers tell us that what we are doing is working, and we are close to ensuring all children have health care coverage,” said Charity Eleson, executive director of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families. “Wisconsin has an opportunity to take that last small step and cover all kids in this state budget.”

Eleson added, “Covering children is not only the right thing to do, it’s the smart thing to do. According to a study done in 2006, Wisconsin’s BadgerCare program saves Wisconsin hospitals \$53.6 million annually as a result of reducing unpaid bills for treating people without health insurance. Governor Doyle has proposed to build on that success by extending coverage to all kids through BadgerCare Plus, which is a cost-effective, sensible way to extend coverage.”

BadgerCare Plus would offer health care coverage to: virtually all Wisconsin children, farmers and other self-employed individuals, youth aging out of foster care, and low-income childless adults. In addition, the proposal would simplify the existing system and reduce the bureaucratic red tape currently keeping families from obtaining coverage. Data released by the Census Bureau indicates that fully 12 percent (26,000) children that live below poverty are uninsured.

“There is broad public support for the idea that all children should have health care coverage, and the investments we make now in health care will yield tremendous returns in the future in healthier children and health care savings for all of us,” said Eleson.

As a result, in large part, to the federal SCHIP program, the percentage of low-income children in the U.S. without health coverage has fallen by one-third in the past decade, even while the overall number of uninsured Americans has grown. This summer, both the U.S. House and Senate passed legislation to renew and improve the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). This legislation would cut the number of uninsured children in America by at least 4 million by 2012.

Just 9.4 percent of all Wisconsinites were without insurance in 2006. Nationally, 15.8 percent of Americans, or 47 million people, lacked health insurance in 2006. This is up from 15.3 percent without health insurance in 2005.

Complete US Census Data is available at www.census.gov

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