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Doyle's Budget Veto Pen Helps Kids and Families

Madison, WI---Vetoes announced today by Governor Doyle on the 2003-2005 biennial budget will ensure the continuation of important core services that help kids and families thrive in the state, according to the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF).

“Coming out of the Legislature, this budget was a mixed bag for kids and families,” said Charity Eleson, associate director of program and advocacy for WCCF. “There were cuts in funding for four-year-old kindergarten and a levy freeze imposed on local governments that would have led to substantial decreases over the next three years in core services to kids and families at the local level.”

The vetoes that the Governor announced today will ensure that over 16,000 four-year-olds statewide continue to have access to four-year-old kindergarten, which is an important first step in ensuring continuing success in school. Allowing locally elected officials determine how best to balance local service demands with reasonable property tax increases will also be ensured by the Governor's veto of the Legislature's imposition of a three-year property tax freeze. The property tax freeze would have forced many already cash-strapped counties, who are responsible for delivering a wide range of human services, to make cuts in local funding for services to children and families.

“At the same time, the Legislature agreed with the Governor's effort to maintain state funding for basic needs and safety net services like health care coverage through Medical Assistance and BadgerCare, child protective services, child care tuition assistance, W-2 cash assistance and emergency housing assistance,” Eleson said. “We were very pleased to see this level of agreement between the Governor and the Legislature on the importance of maintaining the state's commitment to these essential services to children and families.”

WCCF also applauds the Governor's use of his veto pen to ensure the implementation of the newly proposed transitional jobs program for W-2 participants. The transitional jobs

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program will allow participants to work for actual wages in private sector settings and enhance their work experience with education as part of their W-2 experience.

“We need innovative policies like transitional jobs that help poor working families take the steps necessary to get out of poverty,” said Eleson. “The transitional jobs program will continue W-2’s strong emphasis on work, but it makes it possible for participants to actually move out of poverty with tools, like job-specific education, that will help them increase their skills and earnings.”

WCCF is also supportive of the Governor’s move to free up funds to ensure the continued financing necessary for the state’s Medical Assistance program.

“The Governor’s change allows us to breathe more easily and feel confident that Wisconsin will be able to protect its critical health care programs over the next two years,” Eleson said.

WCCF is a private, non-profit organization that focuses on research, policy development and advocacy on multiple issues affecting children, youth and families in Wisconsin.