



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

April 11, 2017

Group Insurance Board
Department of Employee Trust Funds
P.O. Box 7931
Madison, WI 53707-7931

Dear Members of the Group Insurance Board,

We write to you to express our deep concern over the Group Insurance Board's (GIB) decision to strip essential healthcare away from many of the state employees to whom you hold a fiduciary duty to assist. Because of that decision, many in Wisconsin's transgender community and their loved ones will suffer significant risks to their health and welfare.

At its December 30, 2016 meeting, the board retreated into closed session to reinstate an exclusion to the State of Wisconsin's Group Health Insurance Program that deprives state employees of necessary health care. This exclusion will allow the state to refuse coverage for "[p]rocedures, services, and supplies related to surgery and sex hormones associated with gender reassignment."

The GIB had originally removed this exclusion for the 2017 plan year, deciding that policy holders ought to have coverage for gender-affirming medical treatment. However, in a matter of a few months, that exclusion has now been reinstated. This type of flip-flopping on matters as important as people's healthcare does nothing but cause serious confusion and anxiety among an already vulnerable population.

More importantly, revoking coverage for those who have already begun gender-affirming treatment under the previous GIB policy can lead to a stoppage in medically necessary treatment, with dangerous consequences. Recently, two state employees who have suffered that exact scenario filed a lawsuit in federal court alleging violations of their constitutional rights.

In addition to the dangers this drastic policy change poses for the health and welfare of Wisconsin's transgender community, we also have serious concerns over the GIB's lack of transparency in adopting the policy. The board should not have withdrawn into closed session to make such an important decision.

Wisconsin has had a tradition of transparent and open government that works for the people, not against them. Unfortunately, since 2011 that once pristine tradition has been tarnished, due to actions such as this. Choosing to tear healthcare away from Wisconsin residents should not be a decision our state makes, but if it must, it should be made in broad daylight. The public ought to

have an opportunity to voice their concerns and be shown the respect of being able to hear the board's reasoning.

We urge you to return to a more sensible policy on healthcare coverage that provides people with certainty and does not exclude anyone because of who they are. We ask that you embrace transparency and accountability towards the people of our state and those under your care.

Thank you for attention to our concerns, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



State Rep. Mark Spreitzer
45th Assembly District



State Rep. JoCasta Zamarripa
8th Assembly District

cc: Governor Scott Walker
Secretary Robert Conlin, Department of Employee Trust Funds