

WHN: The budget, modified by Republicans, does not include a \$45 million proposal from Gov. Evers to address the social determinants of health in Medicaid. Can you talk about why that was taken out and whether overall this is something that the Medicaid program should invest in?

Vos: So the social determinants, what does that mean?

WHN: I think that you would have to ask the governor specifically what his proposal means –

Vos: Right, that's exactly the problem.

WHN: Are you saying in general or his proposal? In general, do you think that it's something that should be looked at or his proposal is too vague or?

Vos: So \$45 million to study the social determinants, OK? No detail. Nothing more than what sounds like something somebody thought of somewhere with no detail whatsoever. We are not going to support something that uses \$45 million to expand a program that we already think has serious flaws. The problem is we are not paying providers enough for the one in five people who are in our state who are on welfare. One in five people are on welfare. Let's just remember how Medicaid works. If a procedure costs \$1,000, OK? The actual amount the insurance company pays is usually \$500. The cost of the procedure is usually \$250. Let's just remember - \$250 cost, \$500 the insurance company pays, \$1,000 list price. What's the rate that Medicare reimburses at? It's about \$200. It's about 20 percent below the cost of the actual procedure for every person who's on Medicare. What does Medicaid pay? It pays about \$100. So it pays about 20 percent of the cost of what's actually being done as a private procedure in a private hospital. So every person we put on Medicaid drives up the rates for everybody else. And the fact that we have one in five people in our state on welfare is what's driving up the private sector healthcare costs for everybody else who is paying increasing premiums over time to subsidize a system that dramatically underfunds Medicaid. So if we have \$45 million to spend, I would rather put that money like we did, into direct care – increasing funding for nursing homes, increasing funding for Family Care, increasing funding for hospitals. That's where the money should be going, not for some kind of study on vague ideas that does no real good for the people who utilize the system that helps to make sure the rest of us with private insurance pay higher rates.

WHN: Some states have looked at things like using Medicaid program to pay for housing services or help to pay for food for things that some of these people can't get anywhere else and many argue would have a greater impact on their overall health than anything that happens in the doctor's office. So you're saying that general concept is something you would like or is it more targeted toward this vague proposal?

Vos: So, let's just remember – Medicaid is supposed to be healthcare insurance for people who are in poverty below 100 percent, right? That's the whole point of Medicaid. If it is now going to be to supplement food stamps, which is a totally different program paid for by the federal government, that now the state of Wisconsin has to pay part of that? Well, that money's going to come from somewhere – it's going to come from either not giving it to the university, or not giving raises to our public workers, or not paying for some other service that we have. So we cannot afford the current system that we have. We cannot afford one in five people in our state

being on welfare. So if we are now going to say that free healthcare – remember if you are in poverty, no copayment, no premium, no cost-sharing, you can show up as much as you want at the doctor, it's totally free. So now we're going to say, not only can you show up to the doctor every day if you choose, we're also going to pay for your food and your housing and everything else? That is creating a system where especially for people who are able bodied – because a big chunk of the people who are on BadgerCare if it would expand would be people who are able bodied, ready to work – well, knowing that that we have these signs all over the state where people cannot find enough workers, why would we want to give any more incentives for people to not work where there are jobs literally in every community in state that are going empty as we sit here today?