



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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Retain the Rights of Wisconsinites to Provide Input in Medicaid Policy Decisions

Survival Coalition has joined with more than 30 other statewide groups concerned about the impact of the current budget adjustment bill on our state's Medicaid program. Survival's position is that this legislation has not been given the time for careful study of its long-term implications and potentially devastating long-term consequences on more than one million of our residents and that has benefited in the past from strong bipartisan support.

As drafted, this bill would give unelected officials unprecedented power to change or dismantle programs that are critical to a wide range of our citizens. Groups representing older adults, women's health, working families, farmers, people with disabilities and their families and others concerned about quality health care have come through the newly-formed *Medicaid Matters Alliance* to tell legislators how Medicaid in all its forms matter to all of us: our children, neighbors, friends, and co-workers. The proposed changes that curtail public and legislative input in critical programs like SeniorCare, Family Care, children's waivers, and BadgerCare can be removed from this bill and not impact the state's deficit. As advocates for people with disabilities, Survival Coalition is specifically concerned that the authorization to the Department of Health Services to modify Medicaid programs around issues of eligibility, cost-sharing, and benefits does not belong in a budget adjustment bill.

We are alarmed that the power to make changes to these programs is being taken away from the full legislature and we ask legislators to take back their critical role in this process, which includes scheduling hearings and allowing time for Wisconsin's residents to have input into any proposed policy changes. In short, we fear this expansion of DHS authority greatly limits or even eliminates the public's ability to participate in the process of developing health care policy that directly affects their lives and livelihoods.

We ask that "SECTION 112. 49.45 (2m) AUTHORIZATION FOR MODIFICATIONS TO PROGRAMS; STUDY" of the bill be removed and dealt with separately in the normative legislative process.

Supporting our position, the non-partisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau has indicated that these changes are not necessary to balance the state's budget. An attorney who drafted the Medicaid portions of the bill also noted that the legislation "would allow DHS to change any Medical Assistance law, for any reason, at any time and potentially without notice or public hearing." We have heard from many legislators from both parties in previous sessions that such items are not appropriate to include in a budget adjustment bill.

We understand the gravity of the Medicaid deficit. We are supportive of studying the program to find increased efficiencies and improve quality and welcome the opportunity to partner with policymakers and DHS in doing so. However, like our other Medicaid Matters Alliance partners, we believe it should be the full legislature, not unelected agency officials, who decide the future of Medical Assistance programs in our state.

Additional Supporting Organizations: Options for Independent Living, Epilepsy Foundation Southern Wisconsin, Wisconsin Council on Physical Disabilities, Governor's Committee for People with Disabilities, Statutory Council on Blindness, Employment Resources Inc.