



Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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DISABILITY ORGANIZATIONS SAY NEW FUNDING IN THE STATE BUDGET SHOULD BE INVESTED IN LONG TERM CARE

The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations representing more than 40 member groups is calling on state leaders to invest a portion of the state's newly generated \$600 million in keeping people with disabilities and older adults out of costly institutions and letting them remain in their homes.

"Yesterday's announcement by the Legislative Fiscal Bureau that the state now has a balance of nearly \$640 million dollars in new revenues to invest in the next biennium means we have a chance to use some of this funding to help people get the supports they need in the community so they won't go into crisis," said Lynn Breedlove, Executive Director of Disability Rights Wisconsin and co-chair of the Survival Coalition. "We are not talking about using this money to add new programs. This is about continuing to fund what works."

The Governor's budget proposal plans to freeze all of the state's long term care programs which include Family Care, IRIS, COP, CIP and all children's waivers. People currently waiting for long term supports would continue to wait indefinitely. New high school graduates with disabilities would now graduate to no hope of supports for employment or an independent life in the community. The cap would mean the only long term care benefit most would be entitled to is a bed in a nursing home.

"Institutional care is not what people with disabilities and older adults want or need," says Maureen Ryan, Executive Director of Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers. "Institutional care costs nearly twice as much as care in the community. The cap was always a bad idea for everyone - including taxpayers. Now with some additional money on the table in the budget, we can make a cost-effective investment and keep our promise of long term care for those who need it."

Lifting the cap on community long term care was one of the major and consistent messages during the Joint Finance Committee statewide hearings and the main theme at recent town hall meetings hosted by Department of Health Services Secretary Dennis Smith. Self-advocates, seniors, families and advocates continue to plead with state leaders to look to the bi-partisan and innovative history of Wisconsin's long term care system and not turn back the clock. Recently, many legislators have indicated that lifting the cap and funding community services is a top priority if additional dollars were available.

“We have been hearing from many concerned families about what they are worried may happen to them or a loved one under the caps,” says Beth Swedeen, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities. “The good news about the new revenue estimate means that by targeting some of this funding to long term care, people's lives can stay intact and many youth will have a future to look forward to. Our legislators now have an opportunity to do the right thing and lift the caps.”

A recent audit of the state's major long term care program, Family Care, showed the average monthly costs of serving someone in Family Care is \$2,800 per participant per month while the monthly cost of serving someone in a nursing home is over \$5000. In addition, the rate at Milwaukee's Mental Health Complex where many people with developmental disabilities currently live and are waiting to relocate to the community ranges from \$16,500 to \$40,920 a month depending on the setting. The care rate at Central Wisconsin Center, another institution, is approximately \$19,470 a month. In addition, the Family Care audit confirmed that the program has increased access to supportive services that enable older adults and people with disabilities to maintain their independence and remain in their own homes, instead of being forced into more expensive institutional care.

Disability advocates statewide believe lifting the caps on long term care is in keeping with Wisconsin's tradition of strong bipartisan support for community-based care and simply makes good fiscal sense.

The Survival Coalition is comprised of over 40 statewide groups representing people with all disabilities and all ages, their family members, advocates and providers of disability services. For over 20 years Survival has been at the forefront of promoting cost effective, community- based services and supports for people with disabilities.

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