



Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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Date: June 2, 2011

To: Members, Joint Committee on Finance

From: Survival Coalition Co-Chairs
Lynn Breedlove, Disability Rights Wisconsin
Maureen Ryan, Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers, Inc.
Beth Swedeen, WI Board for People with Developmental Disabilities

**Subject: Executive Action on 2011-13 Biennial Budget June 2 & 3, 2011
SHARED REVENUE AND TAX RELIEF -- DIRECT AID PAYMENTS**

County and Municipal Aid -- Funding Reduction – Paper # 595

Requested Action: Adopt Alternative A. 4b

Shared revenues are extremely important to counties in order to maintain consistent and quality services to individuals with disabilities. The committee's decision last week to freeze community long-term care services in the Family Care, IRIS, PACE and Partnership programs combined with significant cuts in shared revenues will result in reductions in available supports to individuals in crisis.

In addition, cuts to counties will have a disproportionate impact on mental health services. Wisconsin's public mental health system is built squarely on the backs of counties. About one-third of all funds supporting services for adults with severe mental illnesses and youth with serious emotional disturbances come from county tax levy. An additional 20% flows through counties as community aids and shared revenues. Additionally, counties rely on Medicaid to fund core community-based services for kids and adults.

The proposed \$36.5 million reduction in shared revenue to counties, along with cuts to youth aids and income maintenance, all potentially reduce overall county revenues. As counties are forced to absorb these cuts, with reduced ability to offset them with property tax increases, the ability of counties to maintain mental health funding will be seriously undermined. In Milwaukee County, further limiting access to community services puts pressure on a system that is already in crisis. These cuts to community based services are short sighted and will result in even higher utilization of costly and traumatizing crisis and inpatient services.

As mentioned earlier, the freezing of funding for community long-term care services for older adults and people with disabilities will also squeeze county budgets. Existing Family Care counties have paid their long-term care portion to the state and they no longer have the money or infrastructure to provide services. Counties will be pressed to find the funding to support individuals in crisis situations when their parent or primary caregiver is no longer available to provide care. Counties are predicting that individuals will resort to costly emergency room visits or behavioral health emergency detentions. Prolonged inpatient stays may follow admissions due to lack of adequate community supports.

We strongly urge the committee to consider the impact of cuts in shared revenues on the ability of counties to deliver services important to people with disabilities. Therefore we request that you support **Alternative A. 4b in Paper # 595**, which would reduce the cuts in the Governor's budget by half.

For Further Information Contact Survival Coalition Co-Chairs:

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