



# Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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*P.O. Box 7222, Madison, Wisconsin 53707*

July 7, 2015

TO: Members, Wisconsin State Legislature

FROM: The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

RE: Survival Coalition Asks for Changes to Supports for Children with Disabilities

We write to bring to your attention a very important issue in the current budget bill regarding changes to supports for children with significant disabilities. The bill eliminates the popular Family Support Program and creates a new Children's COP (Community Options Program). We have communicated concerns about this proposal with DHS and the Joint Finance Committee, and recently secured general agreement that some of the current bill language is in error. However, no legislator has made the technical corrections to fix this issue. We believe other complex, pressing budget issues have overshadowed our request. **Therefore, the Survival Coalition cannot support the proposal as written, and absent a willingness to make requested changes immediately, we ask that you remove Children's COP from the budget bill to allow time for a more thoughtful process that includes input from families impacted by the changes.**

The Family Support Program is a very popular and effective program that provides a small amount of funding to support families and children with significant disabilities. Children and youth with significant disabilities can have extraordinary needs that require unique supports so families and their children can fully participate and benefit from the typical community experiences that all children enjoy. For a Children's COP to be beneficial to families and children the proposal must address the following concerns:

1. Make it clear that the purpose of Children's COP to support children and their families.
2. Keep the flexibility of current supports and services and eliminate language permitting DHS to seek a Medicaid waiver. If Children's COP became a Medicaid waiver then it would become significantly less flexible than the current Family Support Program and would also duplicate the existing Children's Medicaid waivers.

Specifically Survival Coalition asks that you make the following modifications to the budget bill:

**Section 1535, page 473, line 21** add "The Children's COP is established to support children with significant disabilities and their families in order to maximize their capacity for self-determination, contribution and inclusion in their communities"; **p. 475, line 5** [In consultation with] families and [representatives...]; **p. 478, line 15** [needs of the child] and family [being assessed...].

**Section 1535, p. 486, line 12, strike** (14) MEDICAL ASSISTANCE WAIVER a-c.

These changes will assure that Wisconsin's investment in long-term supports for families and children with significant disabilities continues to keep children with their families and in their own homes and communities.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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