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### **Disability Advocates Await Opportunities for Future Changes to Long-Term Care Plan**

Today's final budget votes by the Joint Finance Committee indicate their intent to keep significant changes to long-term care programs, Family Care and IRIS, largely in place, despite ongoing concerns by the public about for-profit entities running the long-term care system. Some changes were made in the final budget motion to improve public input and legislative involvement in next steps.

"The disability advocacy community continues to hear questions and concerns from people with disabilities and family members about these changes," says Kit Kerschensteiner, Survival Coalition Co-Chair. "We have seen these large-scale changes in other states result in unintended consequences that we all want to avoid."

The Joint Finance Committee added a few new requirements in its final budget vote including requirements for 2 public hearings and quarterly reporting as the Department of Health Services moves ahead with securing a new federal waiver for long-term care for Wisconsin residents with disabilities and older adults. "We are glad to have more legislative oversight and the opportunity to get questions answered in a public forum," says Maureen Ryan, Survival Coalition Co-Chair. The final motion does not include any detail on what constitutes meaningful stakeholder involvement.

Disability advocates have been raising questions based upon participant concerns about various elements of the long-term care proposal since its passage in May, including the stakeholder input process, assurance for people's access to the same essential supports they have in place today, protections against counterproductive incentives to institutionalize people the ability for a person to keep their Family Care MCO, and preservation of all elements of self-direction in IRIS.

"Legislators had promised that IRIS would be essentially identical to the current IRIS program," said Beth Swedeen, Survival Coalition co-chair. "Today's final JFC action does not address key points that long-term care participants continue to have questions about. We hope to work with legislators to create some fixes."

[The Legislative Fiscal Bureau verified in a memo](#) this week that some key elements of the IRIS program will not remain intact unless additional changes are made to statutory language.

*Survival Coalition is comprised of more than 30 statewide disability organizations that advocate and support policies and practices that lead to the full inclusion, participation, and contribution of people living with disability.*