



Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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Celebrating what was done, while recognizing there is more to do

People with disabilities, families and advocates for people with disabilities express thanks for key priorities included in the budget while also noting extreme disappointment for inadequate investment in other critical areas.

Cause for applause

Survival Coalition thanks the Legislature and the Governor for the significant investment in the Medicaid Personal Care Services rate and Family Care direct funding supplement.

“We appreciate the acknowledgement of the essential services these workers provide to people with disabilities and older adults that help them stay in their homes and out of expensive Medicaid-funded institutions, and the dire shortage of workers across the state in part due to inadequate wages,” said Beth Swedeen, Survival Coalition Co-Chair.

Survival also appreciates the Governor’s last-minute efforts to get additional per-pupil aid to all students through his partial veto today. Any increase in per-pupil aid helps all students in general education classrooms, including students with disabilities.

Additionally, Survival Coalition also recognizes the increases in: Children’s Long-Term Support (CLTS) funding to address waiting lists; funding for children’s long-term care services intake, application, and screening costs; Child Psychiatry Consultation; and a Suicide Prevention Grant.

Deep disappointment

Unfortunately, the first increase to special education reimbursement rate in ten years is woefully inadequate to even begin to address the needs of students with disabilities.

“Based upon hundreds of family stories from across the state, Survival has heard families describe significant erosion in education quality for children with disabilities with a direct impact on student achievement, emotional well-being, and safety,” said Lisa Pugh, Survival Coalition co-chair. “The budget does not provide reimbursement of even one-third of special education costs, pushing the majority of expenses back on local districts.”

Survival Coalition is also disappointed in the removal of full BadgerCare expansion, dental Medicaid reimbursement increases, crisis intervention services, and transition services for students with disabilities from the budget.

“BadgerCare expansion would allow 8,000 more paid caregivers to have critical health insurance and enable the 30% of Wisconsin’s paid caregiving workforce already in BadgerCare to work and earn more” said Kit Kerschensteiner, Survival Coalition co-chair. “Collectively, that translates into millions more hours of caregiving that could be provided to Family Care and IRIS participants.”

BadgerCare expansion would have resulted in critical mental health supports for many individuals who cannot afford care.

Partial funding of needed investments

Survival Coalition recognizes the importance of funding increases that represent a positive step in the right direction, but that do not go far enough to address serious issues faced by people with disabilities and their families.

While the increases to public transit, specialized transportation, and paratransit are needed and appreciated, major investment is needed to create transportation options that work for everyone.

“Large areas of the state have limited or no transportation options, or of the options that do exist, they are unaffordable, unreliable, unavailable at times people need them, or do not go where people need to go,” said Kit Kerschensteiner, Survival Coalition co-chair. “Survival Coalition’s [fall 2018 statewide survey](#) revealed major transportation gaps in Wisconsin communities and underscore how transportation is a critical—and largely unmet—need that impacts every aspect of people with disabilities and older adults’ lives.”

Investments in lead poisoning and prevention, school based mental health services, rewarding dentists who serve Medicaid patients with disabilities, increasing physician and behavioral health Medicaid reimbursement, and expanding the Opening Avenues to Re-entry (OARS) program all received increased funding, but not at the level that is needed to address these serious issues.

Survival Coalition will continue to advocate for sufficient funding for these investments and will share a full analysis of how the final state budget impacts the disability community next week.

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.