



Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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Statement on Recommendations to Improve Absentee Voting

Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organization is deeply committed to ensuring the rights of voters with disabilities to fully participate in the electoral process. We would like to thank the Wisconsin Election Commission for their report analyzing absentee voting the April 7th Spring Election, and their recommendations to improve access to the absentee voting process.

While absentee voting was heavily utilized by voters with disabilities in the April 2020 election, Survival organizations also heard from many people with disabilities across the state who experienced barriers to voting absentee. Some voters who wished to vote absentee could not do so because they did not receive a ballot in time, could not safely get their ballot witnessed, or were not able to upload their photo ID to request and receive a ballot. Voters who rely on assistive technology to vote privately and independently did not have equitable access to absentee voting as Wisconsin does not have an ADA compliant accessible absentee ballot.

It is important that the Wisconsin Election Commission acts now to ensure voters have confidence in our absentee voting process, especially during the current health crisis, with two major elections just ahead. Survival Coalition is supportive of the WEC staff's recommended motion to allocate CARES Act funding to improve the absentee voting process.

We strongly support the recommendation to mail absentee ballot request information to every registered voter without an active absentee ballot request on file, and other efforts to provide public education on the absentee voting process. The Wisconsin Elections Commission is best positioned to send this mailing, and to oversee and follow up on applications as they are returned. We are also supportive of the plan to add Intelligent Bar Codes to allow for tracking of absentee ballots in the postal system. In addition, we encourage policy makers to expand the provision in Wisconsin law to provide an electronic ballot to military and overseas voters, to provide an accessible ADA compliant absentee ballot to voters with disabilities upon request.

Survival Coalition is supportive of the recommendations in the WEC's *April 7 2020 Absentee Voting Report* and encourages Wisconsin Election Commissioners to support the recommendations from staff.