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## Survival Coalition Applauds Governor’s Task Force Report on Caregiving Recommendations; Requests Immediate Action

(Madison) – The Survival Coalition of more than 30 disability organizations commends the work of the Governor’s Task Force on Caregiving and their 16 strong proposals to improve conditions for direct care workers and family caregivers in the state.

Survival Coalition specifically supports recommendations to enhance resources for family caregivers provided through Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs), proposals to raise rates to providers that are tied to increases in worker wages; efforts to ensure workers can afford and maintain essential benefits like health care and child care and other proposals that will alleviate stress – financial and otherwise – on family caregivers. The report outlines that there are an estimated 580,000 family caregivers and more than 90,000 direct care workers in Wisconsin.

“These Wisconsinites deserve our urgent support,” says Lisa Pugh, Survival Co-chair and co-chair of the Task Force. “The recommendations must be implemented immediately to alleviate both the incredible stress placed on family caregivers and to address the embarrassingly low wages of workers who are providing valued daily supports that keep people with disabilities and older adults healthy and living in their homes, where they want to be.”

The Task Force’s recommendations include many items highlighted by Survival Coalition members and demonstrated through Survival Coalition statewide surveys of people with disabilities and families. A 2016 Survival Coalition survey showed that 95% of responding people with disabilities had difficulties finding home care workers; 85% said they didn’t have enough workers to fully cover open shifts.

“Conditions have gotten worse for workers and families, particularly in the COVID-19 pandemic,” says Beth Swedeen, Survival Co-Chair, and member of the Task Force. “Survival requests that Governor’s office and bi-partisan Legislature now work together to increase the rates paid to providers so these valuable workers can make a wage that allows them to afford health insurance and support their own families.”



Among other strong proposals that Survival has advanced, the Task Force recommends expanding Medicaid as a means to support direct care workers. Survival notes that increasing the poverty level eligibility to 138% (up from 100%) allows nearly one-third of the caregiving workforce who are currently enrolled in BadgerCare to work an additional shift per week while maintaining their health insurance.

“This translates to 457 more care hours a year,” says Kit Kerschensteiner, Survival Co-Chair. “That is significant for many people who cannot find a worker now to help them get out of bed in the morning or get a shower. This, like the other Task Force recommendations, is common sense policy that will save money in the long run, improve care and address this crisis that we can no longer ignore.”

*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.*