



Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

P.O. Box 7222, Madison, Wisconsin 53707

For Immediate Release: Wednesday February 19

Contact: Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations, Co-Chairs
Beth Swedeen, beth.swedeen@wisconsin.gov; (608) 220-2924
Patti Becker, beckerp@clanet.org; (608) 240-8503
Jason Glozier, jglozier@wcilc.org (608) 422-0525

Governor's Budget Recognizes Importance of People with Disabilities

(MADISON) – The Survival Coalition of more than 20 statewide disability organizations thanks Governor Tony Evers for his proposed budget including significant investments to improve the lives of people with disabilities across the lifespan.

The Governor's budget includes a historic, sum-sufficient commitment of 60% state funding for special education to local schools: a move that ensures our local public schools have needed funds to address the growing funding gaps for all kids. Survival Coalition also applauds the Governor's investment in recognizing much-needed school-based mental health services.

Survival is also glad to see the proposed budget's critical investments in non-driver transportation funds, community supports to keep children with significant disabilities with their families and out of institutions, and a much-needed increase to investigate abuse and neglect complaints against people with disabilities and more closely monitor 1- and 2-bed adult family homes. People with disabilities are at 7 times the risk of abuse compared with the non-disabled population.

For the first time, the Governor's proposed budget provides sum-sufficient funding for the Children's Long-Term Support program, which offers much-needed therapies, supports, and care to children with the most significant disabilities: keeping them with their families and out of facilities. "Sum-sufficient funding creates an opportunity for Wisconsin to make good on a 2017 promise to eliminate the waiting list for Children's Long Term Support services. Since 2017, children and families found eligible for supports, only to find themselves waiting due the absence of this commitment in previous budgets" said Patti Becker, Survival Coalition, co-chair.

Survival Coalition strongly supports the proposed increases to public transit, paratransit, County Elderly and Disabled Transportation Assistance and Tribal Elderly Transportation Assistance programs, and the Specialized Transportation program, which are core non-driver transportation options.

"Many people with disabilities are not drivers and depend on public options to get where they need to go, including for basic supplies and groceries and to medical appointments," said Jason Glozier,

Survival Coalition co-chair. “Many care workers also depend on public transit as low-wage workers. With nearly a third of Wisconsin (31%) who are non-drivers, this budget recognizes the growing need for transportation options beyond personal vehicles.”

Survival Coalition also applauds the Governor’s attention to reducing the risks to children of lead poisoning aiming at the root causes: safe, affordable housing and old water pipes.

“Lead poisoning is a risk for more than a third of Wisconsin children statewide and that’s simply unacceptable,” said Patti Becker, Survival Coalition co-chair. “It is a 100% preventable cause of intellectual and developmental disabilities and a tragedy that even one child is needlessly poisoned and affected for life.”

Survival Coalition also recognizes the critical inclusion of these other disability issues in the Governor’s budget:

- Funding for respite care
- Increased support for the Guardianship Support Center.
- increased capacity for the Division of Quality Assurance to investigate and respond to safety complaints, including complaints involving 1-2 bed Adult Family Homes,
- Increased funding for the Board on Aging and Long-Term Care (BOALTC) Ombudsman program to monitor the health and safety of older adults living in long-term care and to investigate complaints related to care and treatment,
- A position to implement the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) program, which lets people who acquire a disability before age 46 set up tax exempt savings accounts to pay qualified expenses, including education, housing and transportation costs.

Survival Coalition also continues to be vigilant of the current federal funding landscape.

“State budgets rely on long-standing investments from the federal government that originate from Wisconsin and other states’ taxpayers,” said Beth Swedeen, Survival Coalition co-chair.

“Survival Coalition is glad the Governor’s budget identifies Wisconsin’s real needs, but our member organizations also recognize that deep cuts to Medicaid and other public programs being considered by Congress would have a huge impact on Wisconsin’s disability community, as well as our state’s small businesses, local workforce, and overall economy.”

Swedeen pointed out that the Medicaid programs with the largest expenses in Wisconsin support children and adults with disabilities who otherwise are eligible for much more costly nursing homes and facilities. Programs like the Children’s Long Term Care program, Family Care and IRIS—all funded through Medicaid—keep people out of costly institutions and in their homes and communities where they want to be.

Survival Coalition encourages the Governor and Legislature to work with the Wisconsin Congressional delegation to prevent cuts to Medicaid and other vital public programs that people with disabilities depend on to survive and thrive.