



Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

P.O. Box 7222, Madison, Wisconsin 53707

May 26, 2015

Senator Darling
Joint Finance Committee Co-Chair
State Capitol, Room 317 East
Madison, WI 53707

Representative Nygren
Joint Finance Committee Co-Chair
State Capitol, Room 309 East
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Sen. Darling, Rep. Nygren, and members of the Joint Finance Committee;

The Survival Coalition of more than 30 disability organizations has reviewed the Legislative Fiscal Bureau's papers on long-term care analysis and alternatives. Survival Coalition supports the following in ensuring that Wisconsin's investment in long-term care to keep people with disabilities and older adults in their own homes and independent is preserved:

Alternative 5 in Paper #356
Alternatives A4, B4, and C3 in Paper # 357
Alternative 3 in Paper # 358

In Wisconsin, all our cost-effective long term care programs—Family Care, Family Care Partnership, IRIS—have been developed, evolved, and been successful because of the ongoing partnerships and relationships with stakeholders. Program participants, their families, service providers, and advocates have been involved in our current system from conception through design, implementation and constant improvement.

The Fiscal Bureau's paper #356 paper on long-term care outlined many of the points Survival has shared with the Legislature, media, and public since the proposed changes were announced in February. Specifically, Survival Coalition points out these key findings in the paper that support our position to preserve our existing system:

- Proven cost effectiveness, including the ability to have reduced primary and acute care costs in the past decade.
- Significant cost savings in administrative costs over for-profit insurance.
- The proposed changes in the budget would eliminate Wisconsin's current non-profit, regional long-term care system that was built on stakeholder involvement.
- The proposed changes in the budget would fundamentally change IRIS from its current form, which offers full budget and hiring authority.

- Elimination of the “any willing provider” requirement in Family Care would reduce choice of providers for long-term care participants.
- Perhaps most important, if the proposed changes fail, the current system would have already been dismantled, and no recourse or contingency plan is in place to assure the health and safety of the more than 55,000 long-term care participants statewide.

Additionally, Fiscal Bureau paper #356 clearly shows no cost advantages to dismantling the current program in favor of the proposed changes.

Survival Coalition is strongly committed to the long-term sustainability of Wisconsin’s long-term care system. We ask the Joint Finance Committee to:

- Use a deliberate and transparent approach moving forward to assess and build upon the strengths of the current system;
- Define and select a body that reports to the Legislature of advocates, program participants, and current service to develop improvements; and
- Establish a process for public debate, input, and approval of proposed changes to long-term care.

We ask the Joint Finance Committee to start any discussions about changes to long-term care with the current system, then assess the strengths and weaknesses of that system. Additionally, we recommend:

- An independent unbiased assessment of the cost-drivers in the overall Medicaid budget, and the current long term care specifically
- An independent unbiased assessment of the cost savings demonstrated in Wisconsin’s current long term care system
- Outcomes to be achieved through any system redesign, and metrics to measure outcomes and assess success.
- Specific recommendations for improvements to Long-Term Care that would improve service quality while reducing costs.

Survival Coalition welcomes the opportunity to work with the Legislature and Department of Health Services to ensure a cost-effective, sustainable, and equitable long-term care system that continues to allow individuals with significant support needs to remain in their homes and communities as active participants in their communities.

Sincerely,

Survival Co-Chairs:

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Survival Coalition Issue Teams: education, employment, housing, long term care for adults, long term care for children, mental health, transportation, workforce, voting, Medicaid and health care.

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