

# **Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations: Thanks Joint Finance Committee for investing in home and community-based services**

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Contact:

Beth Swedeen, beth.swedeen@wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-1166  
Kristin M. Kerschensteiner, kitk@drwi.org; (608) 267-0214  
Lisa Pugh, pugh@thearc.org; (608) 422-4250  
Maureen Ryan, moryan@charter.net; (608) 444-3842

The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations applauds the Joint Finance Committee for approving significant investments in home and community-based services today as part of the 2017-19 state budget.

Items approved by the Committee include ending the Children's Long Term Support program waiting list, the first increase to the personal care rate in nearly 10 years and reforms to the Medical Assistance Purchase Plan (MAPP) that will make it easier for people with disabilities to work without losing access to the Medicaid services they need.

"Many of the budget proposals approved by the Committee today are long-standing priority issues for the disability community. We are especially appreciative of the historic vote to end

the Children's Long Term Support program waiting list," said Survival Coalition Co-Chair Beth Swedeen.

The budget provides funding to end the waiting list for the 2,600 children with significant disabilities in need of long-term supports in Wisconsin. Thanks to the leadership of Governor Walker and the Joint Finance Committee, Wisconsin is set to become one of the first states in the nation to end waiting lists for both its children and adult long-term care systems.

"We thank the Committee for acknowledging the direct care workforce crisis by increasing the personal care rate for the first time in nearly 10 years," said Survival Coalition Co-Chair Lisa Pugh. "The workforce crisis is forcing people to choose between living in the community or moving to a more expensive nursing home or institution, and we hope that the Legislature will continue to focus on and seek solutions to this pressing issue."

Earlier this year over 500 people who use direct care services responded to Survival Coalition's direct care survey. Eighty-five percent of respondents said they don't have enough workers to meet their needs and obtain the services that are authorized in their individual plans. Forty-three percent of respondents can't find a worker 7 or more times per month.

"Survival Coalition supports the improvements to the Medical Assistance Purchase Plan (MAPP) included in the budget that will make it more effective as a work incentive program," said Survival Co-Chair Kit Kerschensteiner. "However, we are concerned about the elimination of three DHS positions that had been included in the Governor's budget to help implement the new MAPP program requirements. We worry that without this additional position authority, DHS does not have the capacity to implement these new program requirements which could lead to people losing critical coverage."

MAPP allows individuals with disabilities to work and save money without losing access to

Medicaid. The changes proposed in the budget increase the medically needy income eligibility limit for the first time in decades and make it easier for individuals to save money without losing access to other Medicaid programs later on.

While Survival Coalition celebrates the many important investments this budget makes to increase access to home and community-based services, we continue to have grave concerns about the impact policy changes being debated by Congress could have on Wisconsin's Medicaid programs. Wisconsin's Medicaid program is currently on a sustainable path. The Medicaid budget has a \$330 million GPR surplus and the cost-to-continue the program at current levels has consistently fallen over the last four budget biennia. However, a proposed \$834 billion cut to federal Medicaid funding being debated by Congress would shift costs to Wisconsin taxpayers and reduce funding for many of the programs the Joint Finance Committee chose to invest in today.

"A cut to federal Medicaid funding is a cut to the Wisconsin programs that help people with disabilities get out of bed in the morning, go to school, work and lead independent lives in the community," said Survival Co-Chair Maureen Ryan. "The proposed \$834 billion cut to federal Medicaid funding will jeopardize the progress Wisconsin has made over the past 20 years in transitioning people with disabilities out of institutional settings and into the community."

Federal Medicaid funding supports 20 Wisconsin programs that provide critical health and long-term care services to more than 1 million Wisconsinites like Family Care, IRIS, BadgerCare, Aging and Disability Resource Centers, the Children's Long Term Support Program, Comprehensive Community Services, intensive in-home autism supports, and school-based services like speech, occupational and physical therapies. Children, older adults and people with disabilities make up two-thirds of Wisconsin's Medicaid enrollment.