

Survival Disability Coaliton: Responds to Governor's budget

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(MADISON) – The Governor's 2017-19 state budget has many impacts on Wisconsin's disability community. The Survival Coalition of Disability Organizations commends the budget's strong support for Wisconsin's innovative and flexible community based Medicaid programs which are key to the independence of children and adults with disabilities. Below is a summary of the disability related issues within the biennial budget:

- **Children's Long Term Supports:** Survival enthusiastically supports the Governor's approval for funding to eliminate the wait lists and serve 2200 children with physical, developmental or emotional disabilities eligible for long-term supports and services.
- **Public Education:** Survival supports the increase in general school aids, the increase in per pupil aids, the special education transition grants, the mental health programs, the bullying prevention grant and the youth transition grants to improve employment outcomes for student with disabilities. Survival will continue to advocate for increases in special education categorical aid which has remained flat over the last decade. In addition, we were very disappointed to see the significant expansion of the special needs scholarship program that occurred without public input. This policy must be fixed in the near future to ensure that public schools are not on the hook to pay exorbitant costs.
- **Direct Care Workforce:** Survival is pleased that Governor Walker's budget acknowledged Wisconsin's community-based direct care workforce crisis. The demand for personal care, which provides cost-effective supports to people with disabilities and older adults in home or community-based settings, is expected to grow dramatically in the coming years and people are already struggling to find workers. The 2% increase in the Medical Assistance Personal

Care rate per year is an important first step in addressing the workforce crisis.

- **Long-Term Care:** Survival Coalition is pleased that the Budget includes the funding to provide Ombudsman services for people over 60 interested or participating in the IRIS program. By January 2018 all of the 72 counties will have access to Family Care and IRIS for their long term care services and supports.
- **Transportation:** Survival Coalition supports the increase to Seniors and Disabilities Transportation Aids (85.21 program) in the Governor's budget but are concerned it is not sufficient to meet the increased need, especially with the continued decreased Transit aids.
- **Mental Health:** Survival is pleased that the Governor's Budget includes an expansion of peer run respite in Wisconsin, by providing funding in fiscal year 2018-19 to develop a Peer-Run Respite Center for Veterans in the Milwaukee area to improve outcomes of veterans in crisis and those having difficulty coping with mental illness. We wish that it was for both years of the budget. In addition, the budget includes positive investments to support inmates with mental health needs, including expansion of the Opening Avenues to Reentry Success (OARS) program to five additional counties. OARS supports reentry to the community for prison inmates with a mental illness, through access to case management, housing, psychiatric treatment, medication, and other assistance.
- **Medicaid:** Survival supports updates to the Medicaid Assistance Purchase Plan (MAPP) work incentives program that are a promising start to addressing the limits placed on people who want to work and earn more but who need to be able to afford their health insurance. The Governor has worked with advocates over the last year to propose various reforms to MAPP and Survival members will be analyzing these changes to ensure they work well for all individuals with disabilities currently in the program.
- **Complex Rehab Tech** - We support the Governor's veto of the Medical Assistance Coverage of Complex Rehabilitation Technology provisions and agree that the issue needs much further discussion and analysis of impact.

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 a disability.