

Disability Rights Wis.: Extraordinary Session puts Wisconsinites with disabilities at risk

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Madison, WI- Disability Rights Wisconsin is deeply concerned by the Legislature's rush to push forward bills released late Friday in the Extraordinary Session planned for today. The proposals give oversight of Wisconsin Medicaid waivers to the legislature, leaving state agencies potentially unable to carry out their core mission. This shift has the possibility to affect services that are critical to adults and families of children with disabilities, including Family Care, IRIS, mental health services, Children's Long-Term Waiver and Katie Beckett. The rush to advance these dramatic changes without time for careful analysis and for constituents to weigh in with their legislators, puts our most vulnerable community members at risk.

Mitch Hagopian, Managing Attorney at DRW, said, "These new laws would create significant inefficiencies, making it difficult for agencies to do their day to day work. Because people with disabilities are disproportionately dependent on government agencies for the service and support they need to live, they are at greater risk to experience significant detrimental impact of these proposals."

The bills unnecessarily interject the legislature into what has historically been the purview of state agencies to decide, and will create unneeded bureaucracy. This will limit the ability of the Department of Health Services to be responsive to community needs, including the needs of Wisconsinites with disabilities who rely heavily on Medicaid and other DHS programs.

“The Disability movement had long held the idea of nothing about us without us,” said Barbara Beckert, Milwaukee Office Director. “The proposed bills are major changes to the way Wisconsin operates. We call on the Legislature to slow down the process, and meet with their constituents to better understand the impact of their proposals. Given the magnitude of these proposals, this should include holding public hearings across the state.”

Proposed changes to Wisconsin elections and absentee voting would decrease participation of voters with disabilities in the electoral process, create confusion, and add to the difficulties and cost for Wisconsin’s 1800 plus municipalities to administer the elections and to provide legally required support for voters with disabilities.

Disability Rights opposes the majority of these bills and asks the legislature to slow down this process and to allow time for full public input on such major changes.