

Disability Rights Wisconsin: Encouraged by Governor's initiatives

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Disability Rights Wisconsin is encouraged by Governor Evers' commitment to people with

disabilities demonstrated by his inclusion of a number of important initiatives, such as increased funding for special education, attention to transportation options, additional resources to fund Medicaid programs, and expanding access to affordable healthcare.

With his proposal of \$600 million dollars in new funding and a five-fold increase in mental health programming for students, the Governor proposes bold steps to end a decade long freeze on special education funding. Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) has advocated for increased funding for many years, as these investments pay off by enhancing confidence, independence and stability.

Affordable, accessible transportation programs are vital to an independent life in the community for Wisconsinites with disabilities, many of whom do not drive or own a car. DRW welcomes Governor Evers' creation of a task force to work on transportation policy solutions and encourages its composition to include representation from the disability community to address a continuum of transportation services to meet diverse mobility needs.

The expansion of Medicaid will provide thousands of Wisconsinites, including those with disabilities, with access to essential health care and will alleviate the pressure the state has endured to reduce the availability of programs that promote safety

and healthy living.

Wisconsin has a proud tradition of bipartisan support for programs for people with disabilities, including the statewide network of Aging and Disability Resource Centers, Family Care and IRIS, Comprehensive Community Services, and Employment First. We look forward to working with the Legislature and Governor Evers on the biennial budget to ensure that children with significant disabilities and their families have the same opportunity as adults to access long term supports.

Currently some of these children are languishing on waiting lists and are unable to access services. DRW encourages the creation of Family Disability Resource Centers to provide education, navigation, support and benefits counselling to families with children with disabilities to help them navigate the state's complex systems.

DRW's Executive Director Lea Kitz stated, "We are gratified that Governor Evers has included a number of significant measures important to people with disabilities in his agenda of first year priorities. We look forward to working with him and the Legislature on these and other issues that will move Wisconsin forward to improve the lives of people with disabilities throughout the state."