

# Survival Coalition: Applauds Governor's focus on disability issues

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(Madison) – The Survival Coalition of more than 30 statewide disability organizations supports the Governor's focus on disability issues in last night's State of the State address. The governor underscored the importance of accessible voting, adequate funding for special education, access to transit, and criminal justice reforms that impact the disability community.

The Governor's address also announced a new focus on rural communities and support for family farmers that includes access to mental health services for farmers.

"We know that people with disabilities vote at levels 10 percentage points lower than the general population, and much of that is due to the additional barriers people with disabilities face at the polls," said Beth Swedeen, Survival co-chair. "The Governor's recognition of those barriers in his address is an important step toward equal access."

Lisa Pugh, Survival co-chair, underscored the importance of recognizing adequate special education funding. "The first increase in a decade passed in the budget was a first step toward long-overdue adequate funding so students with disabilities get the needed supports to be equipped for productive adulthood," Pugh said. "We continue to hear from families statewide that a critical need for supports still exists."

"We applaud both the Governor and the Legislature's support for appropriate and adequately-funded mental health services," said Kristin Kerschensteiner, Survival co-chair. "Recognizing the rising mental health needs of our farming community is an important step in beginning to address the serious lack of mental health

services available in the rural areas of our state.”

Survival Coalition looks forward to working with the Governor and the Legislature on these and other important disability issues during the current legislative session and in the months ahead as plans for the next biennial budget get underway.