

AARP WI: Supports for family caregivers a welcome sight in governor's budget, AARP WI says

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MADISON, WISCONSIN – Wisconsin's nearly 600,000 unpaid family caregivers – a group that AARP WI refers to as the state's unsung heroes for giving up so much of their own time and money to help loved ones remain living in their own homes as long as possible – will receive much-needed support from the state if provisions proposed by Governor Evers survive legislative scrutiny and are included in the final 2021-23 biennial state budget.

Evers' proposed spending plan includes nearly all the recommendations called for by the [Governor's Task Force on Caregiving](#), including a tax credit for family caregivers and hospital discharge requirements to help family caregivers. It also calls for Family Medical Leave Act improvements for caregivers, a reinvestment in Aging Disability Resource Centers, long-term care improvements, provider rate improvements, and more.

"We are thrilled that Governor Evers understands and appreciates the valuable role that family caregivers play in Wisconsin's long-term care system," said AARP Wisconsin State Director Sam Wilson. "We hope his commitment to supporting these caregivers is a bipartisan vision shared by all state legislators as they work to finalize the budget."

For years AARP Wisconsin has pushed for two proposals that would provide immediate help for unpaid family caregivers – the Wisconsin Credit for Caring Act

and the Caregiver Advise, Record, and Enable (CARE) Act, which would help family caregivers when their loved ones go into the hospital and as they transition home.

“In addition, we support the Family Medical Leave Act, expanding it to cover caregiving, as well as task force recommendations affecting the paid caregiving work force, which provides much-needed care for loved ones in Wisconsin’s long-term care facilities,” Wilson said.

Last fall the task force issued a report titled [“Wisconsin Caregivers in Crisis: Investing in our Future”](#), which includes 16 recommendations to support and strengthen the direct care workforce, increase access to needed care, enhance supports for family caregivers, and improve the quality of caregiving. Many of these recommendations are included in the governor’s proposed budget.

“These family caregivers are the lifeblood of Wisconsin’s long-term care system and it is high time we not only recognize this, but provide them with the support and resources they need to continue this heroic work. We firmly believe the recommendations of the task force do exactly that,” Wilson said.

In addition to an individual income tax credit for certain expenses incurred by a family caregiver to assist a qualified family member, the budget includes a provision that would require hospitals to engage with caregivers by recording the name of the family caregiver when a loved one is admitted into the hospital, then keep that caregiver informed on major decisions and provide instructions on the medical tasks they may need to perform once the patient is home.

AARP Wisconsin State Advocacy Director Helen Marks Dicks, a member of the Governor’s Task Force on Caregiving, is optimistic that all provisions included in the governor’s proposal will also be in the final budget, as family caregiving is a bipartisan issue that impacts nearly everyone at some point in their lives.

“Each year, Wisconsin’s unpaid family caregivers provide about 538 million hours of care to their parents, spouses, partners, and other adult loved ones,” Dicks said. “In addition, they spend an average of \$7,000 per year on out-of-pocket costs related to caregiving. They provide this care while also keeping up with their own jobs, running their own households and trying to make ends meet.

“We at AARP believe that making small investments in caregivers right now will lead to big savings for Wisconsin and much better care for families down the road,”

Dicks said. "It's high time we step up our game and do more to assist these heroes. We hope lawmakers will clearly understand that these are the important first steps to providing this critical support."

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