

Arc Wisconsin: Applauds the Governor's proposed investment in family caregivers and the direct care workforce

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Madison, WI – The Arc Wisconsin was pleased today to see Governor Evers announce his strong support of proposals that will improve conditions for family caregivers and direct care workers who support people with disabilities throughout Wisconsin. Today the Governor announced a \$600 million package that includes many of the recommendations forwarded by the [Task Force on Caregiving](#). The Arc Wisconsin's Executive Director Lisa Pugh was appointed as co-chair of the Task Force and led the group in deliberations on the final 16 proposals included in [the report](#).

"Wisconsin was facing a concerning direct care workforce and family caregiving crisis prior to the COVID-19 outbreak which has now put people with disabilities at even greater risk," says Pugh. "Family members of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities tell us they are under incredible stress. The inclusion of these recommendations in the Governor's budget request offers hope."

Key recommendations supported by The Arc Wisconsin and unveiled by the Governor today will invest in and address inequities in the rates paid to providers of direct care services so they can pay higher wages to workers; ensure that workers can afford health care or access public benefit supports that will allow them to work more hours; and provide supports and resources to family caregivers to ensure they can get a break through respite care, more easily find help through a new worker registry, take protected leave from work or get financial support through a tax credit.

“These essential workers are not making enough to support their own families or afford health insurance,” says Pugh. “The proposals that focus on increasing rates and worker wages, improving training and connecting workers with people seeking care will go a long way to valuing this critical workforce. We need these workers now more than ever.”

Family caregivers are the backbone of Wisconsin’s caregiving industry, providing 80% of all care. In a recent survey from The Arc, 92% of caregivers reported that caregiving impacted their employment negatively – sometimes causing them to quit a job. 97% of all respondents reported difficulty finding direct care workers and 98% of families had trouble finding respite to get a break from providing care.

An estimated 580,000 informal caregivers provide more than 490 million unpaid hours of care annually to individuals with disabilities and older adults in Wisconsin.

The paid direct care workforce that people with disabilities rely on for daily supports like bathing, dressing, and eating, is also facing challenges. Estimates show an average annual turnover rate of nearly 50 percent and an average wage of \$10.72 an hour.

“We look forward to working with the Governor the bi-partisan legislature to ensure these proposals pass,” says Pugh. “Every elected official in Wisconsin has a caregiver or direct care worker in his or her district who will significantly benefit from these investments. These changes will save the state money over time and keep people out of crisis.”