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AHCA a Serious Threat to Wisconsinites with Disabilities and Chronic Conditions

Disability Rights Wisconsin, Wisconsin's designated Protection and Advocacy system for people with disabilities, has grave concerns regarding the passage of the American Health Care Act (AHCA), including the impact of the bill's devastating cuts to Medicaid and weakened or eliminated protections for individuals with pre-existing conditions.

The AHCA would repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, cut \$880 billion from Medicaid, roll back protections for people with pre-existing conditions, and force people into the high risk pools. The House bill caps and cuts federal funding for the entire Medicaid program, ending the current guarantee of a 60% federal match from the federal government. As a result of these extreme cuts, states will have to consider eliminating programs, cutting provider rates, reducing benefits, or establishing waiting lists for the wide range of Medicaid services children and adults with disabilities rely on.

Wisconsin has 1.2 million people in Medicaid who could be hurt by these cuts, including children with disabilities. Daniel Idzikowski, DRW Executive Director, said, "This is a sad day for Wisconsinites with disabilities. Wisconsin already has a cost-effective Medicaid system with no room to cut \$1 billion in services and supports. Wisconsin will be harmed for being a leader in providing innovative services that make it possible for people with disabilities to live and work in the community, instead of being forced into nursing homes or institutions."

The roll back of the protections for people with pre-existing conditions, including making Essential Health Benefits optional, would affect 2.5 million Wisconsinites. "If Essential Benefits are not mandatory, insurance plans will NOT be required to cover vital services such as prescription drugs, hospitalization, outpatient services, mental health services, and substance use disorder treatment. The AHCA jeopardizes the progress Wisconsin has made in expanding community services, including addressing mental health needs in our state," stated Barbara Beckert, Milwaukee Office Director.

The addition of \$8 billion for high risk pools does not begin to address the \$880 billion in cuts to Medicaid. "High Risk Insurance Pools have been tested in Wisconsin and failed to provide affordable, comprehensive insurance coverage for many people with disabilities and people with pre-existing conditions. This is not the answer for Wisconsin," stated Amy Devine, Public Policy Coordinator.

DRW strongly opposes any proposal to dilute the protections now afforded people with disabilities through the Affordable Care Act, including cuts to Medicaid, and calls on the U.S. Senate to oppose the American Health Care Act.

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