



Women's Council
· Wisconsin ·

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WOMEN'S COUNCIL WELCOMES CREATION OF GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON CAREGIVING

February 19, 2019 (Madison, WI) – For the past year, the Wisconsin Women's Council, in partnership with The Arc Wisconsin, Respite Association of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' Office on Aging, has hosted listening sessions around the state with family caregivers and local caregiver support organizations. We one caregiver after another talk about high levels of stress at home and work, including lost time on the job, wages, early retirements; need for more available, affordable and flexible respite care options as well as other caregiver supports to aid in their duties; and being unable to find paid (direct care) workers, including issues of worker shortages, turnover, and the impact of these workforce issues on the health, safety and independence of their loved ones.

According to the National Center on Caregiving, an estimated 550,000 family caregivers contribute nearly 588 million hours of unpaid care in Wisconsin annually, valued at \$6 billion. They also report that about two-thirds of caregivers in the United States are female and, further, that about 20 percent of all female workers in the United States are family caregivers.

“Women don't ease up on either their caregiving or employment responsibilities – they cope – with all of it and often at risk to their own financial and personal health,” said Christine Lidbury, Executive Director. “Moreover, many women find themselves, like me, in the “sandwich generation” with caring for aging medically fragile parents and a child with a disability and potentially other growing children. Single women and single mothers may have even fewer resources at their disposal to balance work and caregiving.”

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An estimated two-thirds of older persons with long-term care needs rely exclusively on family and friends to provide assistance. Another 30% will supplement family care with assistance from paid providers. Care provided by family and friends can determine whether older persons can remain at home (National Alliance on Caregiving). Yet, due to a direct care worker shortage, 85% of Wisconsin residents who rely on paid caregivers indicate they cannot find staff to meet their daily needs (Wisconsin Personal Services Association). As Wisconsin's population ages, demands on family caregiving will only increase.

“We know that families are stressed,” says Lisa Pugh, family caregiver, co-chair of the Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance and Executive Director of The Arc Wisconsin. “They cannot find direct care workers, they cannot find respite care, they rarely get a break. This Task Force acknowledges this as a crisis and outlines next steps to find solutions. We are hopeful.”

Governor Evers' Task Force on Caregiving, announced today, will focus on building and retaining a quality direct care workforce, finding strategies to support families providing caregiving supports and services, and improving the quality of caregiving in Wisconsin.

About the Women's Council

The Wisconsin Women's Council, established in 1983, is Wisconsin's statutory commission on the status of women and girl. The Council promotes initiatives that empower women, serves as a clearinghouse for information on programs and resources, provides research and advocacy, and promotes unique partnerships to address barriers and inequalities affecting Wisconsin women. The Council operates under the guidance of a 15-Member Board appointed by the Governor and Legislative leaders. For more information about the Wisconsin Women's Council, visit our web site at <http://womenscouncil.wi.gov>. The Women's Council serves on the Steering Committee of the Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance.

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