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Governor's Budget positive for people with disabilities and their families

The Wisconsin Board for People with Disabilities (BPDD) initial analysis of the Governor's state budget proposal finds positive initiatives in education, children's long-term care, support for caregivers, transportation, IRIS, and access to health care that benefit people with disabilities and their families.

Education and transition to employment

BPDD supports the Governor's proposed increased to special education categorical aid funding, which has been frozen for more than a decade.

"We hear from families that feel the long-running funding freeze is harming the quality of education for students with disabilities and in some cases, it's having serious consequences," said Beth Swedeen, BPDD Executive Director. "The Governor's proposal moves Wisconsin's funding levels closer to the national average and ensure that our public schools can meet the needs of these students."

BPDD is pleased to see increasing support for the special education transition incentive and transition readiness grants and PROJECT search.

Supporting children with disabilities

BPDD applauds the Governor's proposal to provide sum sufficient funding for the Children's Long-Term Support program, which will permanently end the waiting list for kids. No child with disabilities should have to wait for needed supports and services. The Governor's proposal ensures access to nursing, specialized transportation, counseling and other services that lets children with physical and developmental disabilities continue to live with and receive care from their families outside of an institution.

Support for Caregivers

BPDD supports increases in the Family Care direct care and services capitated rate and increasing existing funding designed to boost bonuses or wages of direct care workers, however BPDD recognizes that small increases to already low wages are not enough to address the caregiver crisis.

"We know that people are not getting the care they need," said Swedeen. "A recent survey showed that 95% of people with disabilities and their families had trouble finding caregivers. Many family caregivers are reducing hours or leaving the workforce entirely in order to care for family members, risking their own financial futures."

The Governor's Executive Order creating a Caregiver Task Force is a positive and necessary step to develop solutions to address low wages, lack of health care and other benefits, training and support that impact the recruitment and retention of quality caregivers. "The caregiver crisis is only projected to increase across the state," said Swedeen. "It is critical that this taskforce results in a package of tangible policy solutions. These problems will not be solved without funding."

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The inclusion of paid family leave within the Governor's budget is a positive step forward to support working family caregivers.

Transportation

BPDD supports increased funding for public transit and specialized transit. Many people with disabilities and paid caregivers that help keep people healthy and independent rely on transit services to get to work, medical appointments, and other business in the community.

However, investment in public transit alone is insufficient to address the concerns of non-driving populations—which include low income workers without cars, aging adults, and people with disabilities—and does not address the need for a regional approach to transportation that enables non-drivers to commute to jobs, health care centers, and other destinations that critical to routine business.

“Transportation is among the top concerns BPDD hears about, especially the challenges faced when people need to get to destinations in another town or county,” said Swedeen. “Recently, Survival Coalition conducted a statewide survey of older adults and people with disabilities the results confirm what we consistently hear: people can’t get where they need to go on their schedule and it negatively impacts their lives in lot of ways.” (see [2018 survey results](#)).

IRIS

BPDD supports the Governor's proposal to codify the IRIS long term care waiver program in the statutes.

Expansion of health care coverage

The Governor's proposal to allow people making up to 138% of the federal poverty level—just over \$17 per year for an individual—to access Badgercare will help some low-income people with disabilities, family caregivers, and low-income workers providing care services for people with disabilities.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) who are too functional to qualify for a long-term care program, people with disabilities who are waiting (sometimes up to three years) for a disability determinacy, people with chronic or intermittent health conditions, and people with a primary diagnosis of mental health are all in Badgercare. An estimated 30% of Wisconsin's paid caregiving workforce is in Badgercare, and many family caregivers who have had to reduce hours or leave the workforce to take care of aging adults and people with disabilities are also in the Badgercare population.

BPDD supports provisions designed to improve dental access, including increasing the Medicaid reimbursement rates for dentists and increasing payments to dental providers that serve Medicaid recipients with physical and intellectual disabilities.

BPDD supports the Governor's initiative to address social determinants of health. Improving Medicaid recipient's housing, nutrition, transportation, stress management, and other services positively impact an individual's economic and social condition and in turn their health.

BPDD is partnering with Disability Rights Wisconsin and The Arc Wisconsin to provide [State Budget Trainings](#) for the Disability Community around the state.

Read [BPDD's full legislative and budget platform](#).