



August 20, 2019

Contact: Beth Swedeen, (608) 266-1166

WI Board for People with Developmental Disabilities Applauds Forward Movement of Governor's Task Force on Caregiving

(MADISON) – The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD) joins the wide array of disability and aging advocates, provider groups, self-advocates and families in applauding next steps announced Monday by Governor Tony Evers in naming members of a Governor's Task Force on Caregiving that will meet for the first time Sept. 25.

“From all corners of Wisconsin, BPDD board members with disabilities and family members are experiencing the extreme shortage of direct care workers,” said Beth Swedeen, Executive Director and one of the 29 Wisconsin residents named to the Task Force. She also is a family caregiver. “There are few issues facing the disability community that are putting more stress on people living with disabilities and their families.”

Swedeen said BPDD has received stories of people with disabilities needing to be hospitalized or move at least temporarily to nursing facilities because of the lack of community-based care. “High-quality direct care workers are critical in keeping people with disabilities healthy, safe and able to stay in their own homes,” Swedeen said. “Direct care is among the lowest-cost long-term supports available, yet provides one of the most critical services in allowing people with disabilities to experience high quality of life.”

Swedeen said much of the care being provided statewide is by unpaid family caregivers, in part because so many people with disabilities cannot find enough direct support workers and because families often feel they cannot trust others to provide complex, high-quality care, particularly when wages are low and few caregivers receive health care and other work-related benefits.

The broad charge of the Task Force, outlined in the Governor's Executive Order issued last February, addresses both the paid direct support shortage and the stresses placed on family caregivers.

The Charge of the Task Force includes identifying:

- Strategies to attract and retain a strong direct care workforce.
- Supports for families providing care
- Recommendations for a registry of home care providers and services that help match people to workers.
- Strategies to improve compensation and benefits for workers.

Swedeen said the task force participants include people who use community-based direct care supports, family caregivers, and caregiver organizations that provide care in community settings.