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Survival Coalition Supports Governor's Proposals to Improve Conditions for Direct Care Workers, Family Caregivers

(Madison) – The Survival Coalition of more than 25 disability organizations commends Governor Evers for the proposals announced today to improve conditions for direct care workers and family caregivers in the state.

Survival Coalition specifically supports recommendations to enhance resources for family caregivers provided through Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs), proposals to raise rates to providers that are tied to increases in worker wages; efforts to ensure workers can afford and maintain essential benefits like health care and child care and other proposals that will reduce stress – financial and otherwise – on family caregivers.

“There are an estimated 580,000 family caregivers and more than 90,000 direct care workers in Wisconsin,” says Lisa Pugh, Survival co-chair and co-chair of the Task Force. “These proposals must be a central part of the next state budget to alleviate the incredible stress placed on family caregivers and to address the embarrassingly low wages of workers who are providing valued daily supports that keep people with disabilities and older adults healthy and living in their homes, where they want to be.”

The Governor's proposals include many items promoted by Survival Coalition members and demonstrated through Survival Coalition statewide surveys of people with disabilities and families. A 2016 Survival Coalition survey showed that 95% of responding people with disabilities had difficulties finding home care workers; 85% said they didn't have enough workers to fully cover open shifts. A new statewide survey out this month shows nearly half of respondents worry that the pandemic will result in them permanently losing the direct care or respite workers they rely on daily.

“The caregiver crisis has gotten worse for workers and families, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic,” says Beth Swedeen, Survival co-Chair, and member of the Task Force. “We need bi-partisan support of these proposals to make the necessary investments to increase the rates paid to providers so these valuable workers can make a wage that allows them to afford health



Survival Coalition

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insurance and support their own families. Additionally, the Governor's proposal to increase Family Care rates for direct care and services recognizes the actual cost of community supports that keep people in their homes and out of costly institutions."

"These proposals are long overdue, common sense policy," says Kit Kerschensteiner, Survival Co-Chair. "They offer significant relief for many people who cannot find workers now to help them get out of bed in the morning or get a shower. These investments will save money in the long run, improve care and address this crisis that we can no longer ignore."

Survival Coalition is comprised of more than 30 statewide disability organizations that advocate and support policies and practices that lead to the full inclusion, participation, and contribution of people living with disability.