



For Immediate Release  
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## **The Arc Wisconsin is Eager to Work with the Governor, Legislature on a Budget that Improves the Lives of People with Disabilities**

**Madison, WI** - People with disabilities and chapters and members of The Arc Wisconsin applaud the announcements in the Governor's budget proposal that will significantly improve quality of life for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) across the state. People with disabilities of all ages are impacted directly by many decisions in the budget from investments in education, direction of health and long-term support policies and programs, expansion of transportation options, workforce initiatives and more.

"The Governor's focus on equity and including people with disabilities in the conversation is very welcome," says Lisa Pugh, Executive Director. "People with disabilities are among the most underserved populations in the state and have been impacted greatly by the pandemic."

The Arc Wisconsin specifically celebrates several proposed investments in the 2021-23 Executive Budget:

- \$709 million in increase special education aid, with a commitment to sum sufficient funding and the goal of reaching 50% state reimbursement in year 2 as well as critical investments in the high cost fund.
- Investments in mental health supports for students as well as additional funding to help students with disabilities transition into the workforce and postsecondary education.
- A recognition of the needs of the direct care workforce and family caregivers who provide critical daily supports to people with disabilities like help with dressing, bathing, meals, and community life. Specifically, the Governor proposes, and we support:
  - An expansion of the definition of who qualifies for Family Medical Leave under current law
  - An increase in funding for direct care services within the Family Care program
  - Increases in the Medicaid personal care rate
  - Increased funding for ADRCs to expand their outreach to caregivers
  - Implementation of a family caregiver assessment pilot

- An initiative to establish equitable and sustainable minimum rates for home- and community-based long-term care supports that can help providers pay their direct care workers a living wage
  - Development of a Home Care Provider Registry that will help families and individuals find workers and help workers locate shifts in their community
  - Support for expansion of BadgerCare that can ensure access to affordable, quality healthcare for the workforce that supports people with disabilities.
- A commitment to public transportation and other investments in systems that support non-drivers so people with disabilities can have full access to their communities.
  - A directive to improve access to tax-deferred ABLE Savings Accounts for Wisconsinites with disabilities and their families that help them save their own money without sacrificing the supports they require.
  - A recognition of the need to continue to invest in employment supports for people with disabilities through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Project SEARCH, as well as school youth transition programs to get people with disabilities back to work and to ensure they can contribute to the economy.

“There is still more to celebrate in the Governor’s budget for people with disabilities. We look forward to working with the bi-partisan legislature to move these proposals forward and to connect elected officials with people with disabilities and families in their districts so they can understand more about their daily lives,” says Pugh. “Disability is a non-partisan issue and we hope that the stories of constituents will make a difference as legislators make these very important decisions and choose priorities in this budget.

*The Arc Wisconsin advocates for and serves people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD), including Down syndrome, autism, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, cerebral palsy and other diagnoses. The Arc Wisconsin has 14 local chapters and is connected to a network of more than 650 chapters across the country promoting and protecting the human rights of people with I/DD and actively supporting their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes and without regard to diagnosis.*

*Editor’s Note:* The Arc is not an acronym; always refer to us as The Arc, not The ARC and never ARC. The Arc should be considered as a title or a phrase.