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BPDD Supports Governor's Proposal to Invest in Critical Mental Health Supports, Expand BadgerCare

(MADISON) -- The Wisconsin Board with People with Disabilities (BPDD) supports Governor Evers' proposed investments in critical mental health supports and expansion of BadgerCare, which is an important step toward addressing Wisconsin's caregiver crisis that has only worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"A recent Survival Coalition survey of more than 300 Wisconsinites and their families shows over half say they are experiencing a lasting increase in mental health conditions and have a need for increased mental health supports," said Beth Swedeen, Executive Director. "The Governor's investment would take a step toward addressing the added stressors the disability community has faced during the pandemic."

The Governor's proposal provides an added \$150 million to increase access to mental health supports, increase school-based mental health supports, expand telehealth access, address substance abuse and the opioid crisis, and expand BadgerCare to people making up to 138% of the Federal Poverty Level.

"The disability community disproportionately experiences transportation barriers that make accessing health care especially challenging, Swedeen said. "Expanding telehealth and reducing barriers are tools that can help."

Swedeen also said that Medicaid expansion is a key strategy for addressing Wisconsin's dire shortage of direct support workers and unpaid family caregivers, many of whom have had to give up or reduce employment during the pandemic to care for loved ones because workers were even less available and the risks of exposure made people with disabilities wary of allowing caregivers in their homes.

"We know that about 30% of Wisconsin's direct care workforce already is on BadgerCare because wages in the field are so low. Medicaid expansion would allow those workers to work up to one shift per week (nearly 8 hours/week) and still retain critical health insurance," Swedeen said. "Medicaid expansion also will help many unpaid family caregivers who have experienced loss of income to care for loved ones."

Medicaid expansion was one of the recommendations from the Governor's Task Force on Caregiving, which included Swedeen and BPDD's chair, Elsa Diaz-Bautista.



BPDD looks forward to working with the Governor and the Legislature throughout the budget process.

Read the Governor's full press release with detailed initiative here:
<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/WIGOV/bulletins/2c01c51>

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