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## **WALA Appreciates Governor's Proposed Investment in Long-Term Care A Meaningful Start to Improving 'Family Care' Program**

The Wisconsin Assisted Living Association (WALA) appreciates Governor Evers' 2021-23 biennial budget proposals to improve Wisconsin's long-term care system. WALA believes the Governor's recommendations are an important first-step toward needed repair and reform of Wisconsin's Family Care program and is looking forward to working with the legislature during the budget process.

The Family Care program is in need of major investment to maintain quality care. New provider reimbursement methodologies are needed to accurately reflect the actual cost of care and the rising expenses that occur year-after-year. Further, these changes are necessary so long-term care providers can compete in the marketplace to recruit and retain quality caregivers.

Providers deliver the hands-on care to our most vulnerable populations – Wisconsin's frail elderly and individuals with disabilities. On average, nearly 80 percent of a provider's budget is dedicated to staffing. Therefore, with varying degrees of individuals served - the Family Care program can either influence or dictate caregiver wages.

The perspective of many providers is that Wisconsin's Family Care program is in need of real repair.

*"It is a sad reality that many long-term providers who participate in Wisconsin's Family Care program are struggling to make ends," stated Michael Pochowski, CEO of the Wisconsin Assisted Living Association and served as an appointee to the Governor's Task Force on Caregiving. "Assisted living facilities have been and continue to be on the front-lines of the COVID-19 pandemic and are enduring a caregiver hiring crisis. While 'managed care' might be viewed suitable from an accountant's perspective – many providers find themselves unable to compete with gas stations, retail stores, fast-food restaurants, etc. to hire quality caregivers. They are the cornerstone of providing quality care.*

### **About the Wisconsin Assisted Living Association (WALA)**

WALA – Wisconsin Assisted Living Association is the premier statewide association for Wisconsin's assisted living industry. WALA represents the majority of Wisconsin's assisted living providers and their residents, with over 1,500 members. WALA promotes standards of quality care and provides valuable member services to organizations providing assisted living services. WALA leads the profession with educational programs, professional products and tools, and other member quality resources.

The WALA membership includes community-based residential facilities (CBRF), residential care apartment complexes (RCAC), and adult family homes (AFH). These facilities serve over 20,000 residents and employ tens of thousands of employees.

**WALA – Wisconsin Assisted Living Association**

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