
Voting Bills Increase Barriers to Absentee Voting for Families

Madison, WI (June 21, 2021): This week the State Assembly is scheduled to vote on several voting-related bills that will make it more difficult for people, including families who have children with disabilities, to vote. Family Voices of Wisconsin is very concerned that the package of Assembly bills proposed will limit access to voting for many who do not have easy access to a polling place due to health, disability, transportation or life circumstances. These life experiences should not marginalize our ability to participate in one of the most essential activities of our democracy.

For parents and other caregivers who have children with disabilities and complex medical needs, life can be **unpredictable**. On any given day, our children may need our full attention, may need to stay home from school due to illness, or may need an urgent visit to the doctor. Absentee voting is the best way for many families to vote in any given election.

These bills increase barriers and add confusion to how citizens, including families and other caregivers, can vote using absentee ballots and how they return their absentee ballots. These proposals also add penalties if ballots are not returned by specified individuals—adding confusion and hurdles to absentee voting. These legislative proposals may result in decreased participation in elections by people who cannot stand in line for hours, travel to their voting place, or be away from their children or other family members on election day.

As members of the larger disability community, Family Voices urges Wisconsin state policy makers to work with disability advocates, who can offer recommendations to improve the electoral process, before passing these pieces of legislation. As legislators consider changes to voting laws, they must proceed with caution to avoid creating new or unintentional barriers that could impact the voting rights of hundreds of thousands of state residents, including those with disabilities and their families. We encourage legislators to slow the process down, look at the data and work with us to craft legislation supporting accessible and inclusive elections.

Family Voices of Wisconsin (familyvoiceswi.org) is Wisconsin's Family-to-Family (F2F) Health Information Center and provides support to families who have children with disabilities or special health care needs. Nationwide, **19%** of children under 18 have a disability or special health care need.