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### **Governor Evers Proclaims Loneliness and Social Isolation Awareness Day**

Madison, WI – Governor Tony Evers is bringing attention to the ongoing challenges and new state initiatives to address loneliness by proclaiming today, December 15, as Loneliness and Social Isolation Awareness Day in Wisconsin.

Loneliness, social isolation, and lack of social connectedness have a significant impact on the physical and mental health of people with disabilities in Wisconsin and across the United States. “While people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities can experience loneliness and social isolation, people with disabilities are at higher risk for abuse and neglect due to lack of social relationships beyond paid staff, a lack of community participation, and lack of decision making in their lives,” said Sally Flaschberger, Project Manager with the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities’ (WI-BPDD) Living Well project.

WI-BPDD has joined with 50 agencies, organizations, and researchers statewide to form the Wisconsin Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness (WCESIL) to address these challenges and find community-based solutions. The group brings together aging and disability organizations to develop strategies to meet the needs for all people in Wisconsin.

WI-BPDD Executive Director Beth Swedeen says, “People with disabilities were experiencing high levels of social isolation before the pandemic, but now we are seeing less than half reporting any level of natural support outside paid caregivers. Research shows lack of these community connections increases the danger of abuse and neglect.”

Swedeen said the new coalition of groups working on these issues will make an impact by raising awareness, engaging in policy initiatives, and sharing detection and support strategies to make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities and older adults. BPDD appreciates Governor Evers’ recognition of this important work.