

Press Release: DRW Reaction to 2025-27 Executive Budget Proposal

For Immediate Release: February 20, 2025

Contact: Lisa Hassenstab, Public Policy Manager, Disability Rights Wisconsin,
lisah@drwi.org, (608) 308-2639

Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) applauds investments proposed by Governor Evers in the 2025-27 Executive Budget proposal that would help improve the lives of Wisconsinites with disabilities. “These investments move Wisconsin in the right direction, and we look forward to working with the Governor and the Wisconsin State Legislature to ensure these proposals become reality. Together, we can build a state where all people with disabilities have the resources, services, and support they need to thrive,” said Jill Jacklitz, DRW’s Executive Director.

Proposed funding of particular interest to DRW includes:

- **Funding for crime victim service providers;** DRW is one of many victim service providers in Wisconsin impacted by massive federal VOCA funding cuts that went into effect last year, severely impacting DRW’s ability to provide services to people with disabilities who are victims of crime. A significant investment by the State is required to maintain any kind of meaningful, statewide support for victims of crime, including people with disabilities.
- **Creation of and funding for a civil legal assistance program;** Wisconsin is one of only 14 states that provides no financial support for civil legal aid from GPR. Some dollars from other sources are provided for civil legal aid services, but often funding from those sources has restrictions which makes it difficult to serve the needs of people with disabilities.
- **An increase of funding for special education aid to allow for a reimbursement of 60 percent for local special education costs;** while DRW supports a reimbursement rate of 90 percent, the proposed investment would move the needle in the right direction toward additional supports for children with disabilities in our schools.
- **Sum-sufficient funding of the Children’s Long-Term Support program;** CLTS is a critical program for many families across the state to meet the needs of their child in their home, school, and community. Sum-sufficient funding is needed to ensure adequate supports for kids in this program and parity with Wisconsin’s adult long term care programs.
- **Increased transportation funding for programs serving individuals with disabilities;** many individuals with disabilities do not drive and have limited

transportation options in many areas of Wisconsin. Access to transportation services to get to work, appointments, the grocery store, or even to vote is needed to support options and independence for Wisconsinites with disabilities

- **Almost \$300 million for school-based mental health services;** the mental health needs of students across Wisconsin are well-documented, and a significant investment is needed to ensure Wisconsin's schools can support the students they serve in a meaningful and impactful way.
- **Expansion of access to mental health services across Wisconsin;** Kit Kerschensteiner, DRW Director of Legal and Advocacy Services, states, "We are pleased to see increased investment in the expansion of mental health programs that are voluntary, peer-run or peer-supported, and focused on local or regional services closer to where people live. These types of programs help to meet the needs of Wisconsinites seeking mental health care and keep them close to home and connected with their community."

While DRW supports these proposed investments, cuts to Medicaid funding currently being considered by Congress pose a deep threat to Wisconsin's state budget. These cuts also threaten Wisconsin's workforce and the almost 20 percent of Wisconsinites receiving health and/or long-term care services through Medicaid-funded programs, including 1 in 3 Wisconsinites with disabilities. DRW asks the Governor, state legislators, and Wisconsin's Congressional delegation to strongly oppose these proposed cuts to Medicaid funding.

Disability Rights Wisconsin is a private non-profit organization that protects the rights of people with disabilities statewide. DRW serves as the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy system for the State of Wisconsin, charged with protecting the rights of children and adults with disabilities and keeping them free from abuse and neglect.