



WISCONSIN BOARD FOR PEOPLE
WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



Brett Maki of Madison, WI is a volunteer, Vice President of the Youth Leadership Forum Board, 2024 recipient of the Dan Remick Award for Self-Advocacy, and 2023 Partners in Policymaking graduate. It is through his participation in Partners that Brett has done his best advocacy work.

A few years ago, Brett lost five hours of Supportive Home Care services even though his disability had not changed. He decided to make it his mission to do something about that. Brett said, “I know what services I need and how to advocate those. The functional screen does not accurately capture what I can and cannot do.” He started by reaching out to his legislators and sharing his story and his ideas for improving the process. He realized legislators have no idea how services impact people’s daily lives.

“Nothing beats firsthand experience – Partners taught me that.”

His legislators worked with him on his solutions and helped him get a meeting with the Department of Health Services (DHS), where he again shared his story and a proposal for improving the functional screen. DHS agreed to work with the Legislative Reference Bureau to find out how other states administer the program and work to make it more user-friendly. Brett’s ideas include developing categories that determine how often a person would need to go through the

functional screen. For example, someone with a permanent disability could do it every three years versus someone with a temporary disability who would do it every year. He broke down the questions to capture more accurately what a person can actually do. He also suggested combining the supportive home care assessment with the functional screen.

Brett's long-term goal is to implement these changes in Wisconsin and then work to change it across the country. In addition to his local legislators, he is working with someone from his congressman's office to make that happen.

"I thought there would be a lot of resistance, but everyone has been very open so far. I'm in contact with DHS monthly to keep things moving." Brett has been told there will be changes to the functional screen; it is just a matter of when it will happen.

If you'd like to improve your legislative advocacy skills, consider being part of this year's Partners in Policymaking program.