Wisconsin BPDD
Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities

2027-2029 DISABILITY POLICY & BUDGET PRIORITIES

#1 WE BELONG WITH OUR FRIENDS, NEIGHBORS AND FAMILIES

People with disabilities fought for decades for laws that ensure that we cannot be locked away in institutions. A recent U.S. Department of Justice memo says these laws do not give people the right to live in their own homes and communities. **We need state legislation to:**

- Keep us from being segregated into institutions, get us the help we need at home and in the community, and ensure accountability when not enough is done to keep us in our own homes.
- Make sure state agencies coordinate and work together to improve the help people need to live at home, work in the community, and reach their full potential.
- Require the state to get recommendations from disability advocates on how to support people at home and keep them out of expensive, Medicaid-funded institutions.

#2 CARE AT HOME COSTS LESS

Family Care, IRIS, and CLTS programs provide home care. Without home care, children and adults with disabilities will be forced into high-cost Medicaid-funded nursing homes and institutions where they don't want to live. **Family caregivers are already doing a lot and they can't do any more.** Many people with disabilities will outlive their family caregivers.

- Shift funding away from expensive regulated residential settings/group homes that require high levels of staffing and toward supporting people in their own apartments and homes.
- **Require the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to publicly report** the number of hours unpaid family caregivers spend supporting their loved ones with disabilities and care infrastructure capacity.[i]
- Create a separate insurance pool for unpaid family caregivers, care workers, and small businesses and co-ops that employ caregivers to buy into, so those who provide care have access to quality health care.[ii]

#3 SAME RULES FOR ALL SCHOOLS

Schools that receive public money to educate students with disabilities should all follow the same rules, provide the same rights and protections, and share the same information with the state.

- **Require private voucher schools receiving taxpayer dollars to report data** on students who apply and end up attending, and how well students with disabilities are learning.
- **Cover the actual cost of educating students with disabilities**.

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#4 WORK, EARN, AND SAVE MORE

People with disabilities are a valuable, largely untapped group of dedicated potential employees who can help fill Wisconsin's workforce shortage. Businesses benefit when people with disabilities become employees, working alongside people without disabilities and contributing to their communities.

- **Pay employment service providers based on the number of hours people with disabilities spend working** in competitive integrated employment (CIE), not the number of hours of employment services received.
- **Lift the income cap from the work incentive program for people with disabilities (MAPP).** This would allow people with disabilities to work, earn, and save more and leverage ABLE accounts so they can cover costs, like housing, without losing health or home care.

#5 INCREASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING STOCK THAT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES CAN RENT, OWN, AND USE

The widespread lack of affordable housing pushes many people with disabilities into high-cost, Medicaid-funded group or institutional settings because there is simply no place else to go.

- Incentivize all new home builds to be accessible (require zero clearance entrance, accessible bathroom on first floor, and bedroom on first floor) so people can age in place.
- Incentivize renovations of existing housing and conversions of commercial properties into new housing to meet minimum accessibility requirements.
- Ensure new housing developments are not segregated or institutional in nature and do not use Medicaid dollars intended to pay for home care for people with disabilities.

#6 HELP NON-DRIVERS GET WHERE THEY NEED TO GO ON TIME

31 percent of people in Wisconsin – and growing - are currently non-drivers. Being or becoming a non-driver impacts where people can live, work, and whether they get health care.

- Create a formula based on projected number of non-drivers and use a shared revenue mechanism to distribute funds to improve regional mobility, non-driver transportation capacity, and increase transportation options for non-drivers.

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[i] Report number of workers, vacancies, hours of potential care that can be provided, providers taking new Medicaid funded clients, and the wait between when hours are authorized and when a provider starts work.

[ii] Many family caregivers are in BadgerCare because they reduce work hours or leave their jobs to provide care. About 25% of paid caregivers are in BadgerCare. Providing a pathway to coverage will allow caregivers to move out of BadgerCare to private sector health care coverage.