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Disability Rights Wisconsin Applauds Governor Walker’s Commitment to Children with Disabilities Across Wisconsin

Madison, WI – Today Governor Walker announced more good news for children with disabilities across Wisconsin. The Governor signaled that his budget will commit more than \$39 million to support families raising children with significant disabilities, effectively eliminating the current waiting list for critical long term support services.

“On behalf of 2200 children with disabilities still awaiting services designed to support their development and meet their potential, Disability Rights Wisconsin raises its voice in thanks for the Governor’s significant commitment,” said Daniel Idzikowski, Executive Director. “The Governor’s budget initiative will have a positive effect on the lives of thousands of Wisconsin children and fulfill a goal sought by disability advocates for more than a decade. Providing children with the most significant needs the support they need to grow and develop within their families makes sense from both a policy and budget perspective,” stated Idzikowski.

DRW has worked with parents and advocates to advance this idea ever since Wisconsin’s Children’s Long Term Supports Medicaid Waiver program was approved. Families who have a child with significant disabilities are more likely to live in poverty and experience financial hardship and stress than other families. Yet in Wisconsin, 46% of eligible children and families have been waiting for services that help them live at home and be part of their communities, including specialized equipment, respite, or home modifications. These supports also allow parents to maintain active participation in the workforce.

Families could expect to wait from 1 to 8 years for services. During the most critical time of human development, such a wait could have a devastating impact on children and exacerbate the stress faced by their families. These wait lists affected children in every corner of the state. Under the Governor’s proposal, enough funding will be provided so that the current waiting list of children eligible for long-term supports will be eliminated by 2018, even as wait lists for adult long term care services are eliminated through the statewide expansion of FamilyCare and IRIS.

This commitment by the Governor makes the provision of long term supports in Wisconsin more equitable between eligible adults and children. We believe this funding to support children and families today will have a lasting positive effect that will result in a higher quality of life and less pressure on the adult long term care system in the future.

Disability Rights Wisconsin looks forward to working with the Joint Finance Committee to move this critically important budget proposal forward to help improve the lives of children with disabilities throughout Wisconsin.

Disability Rights Wisconsin is the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy agency for the State of Wisconsin.

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