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AARP says removal of nearly 300 budget items was ill advised and poorly timed

We at AARP Wisconsin are extremely disappointed with the actions taken last Friday by members of the state's Joint Finance Committee, who proposed a resolution that removes most of Governor Evers' nearly 300 proposed state budget items without taking an appropriate amount of time to consider the testimony and online comments of thousands of Wisconsinites.

The JFC held three in-person state budget hearings, but offered only one virtual budget hearing, despite the fact that many residents are still hesitant to gather in large indoor spaces due to COVID-19 concerns. This resulted in many citizens not having an opportunity to testify other than leaving comments on the JFC's website.

More than a thousand people made their voice heard on that site, which stopped accepting new comments as of last Friday at noon. Then just a few hours later the JFC proposed its budget resolution. We believe committee members should have taken more time to read and process the comments left by their constituents before moving forward.

Wisconsinites who took the time to share their comments with state lawmakers on budget issues of great importance to them should receive the proper respect and consideration they deserve.

It is especially prudent during this budget cycle to slow down the process and take our time, as the state still does not have clear information about how we can spend federal funds coming in as part of the American Rescue Plan. This ARP money will have a tremendous impact on the state's next two-year spending plan.

Our hope is that your readers will contact their own local state legislators and urge them to tell the members of the Joint Finance Committee to vote “no” on a motion that removes most of the governor’s proposals.

Then ask them to take more time to consider all viewpoints on critical budget issues, such as expanding Medicaid and broadband services, lowering prescription drug costs, and providing more support for Wisconsin’s nearly 600,000 unpaid family caregivers.

We have great faith that our state lawmakers can work together in a bipartisan manner to pass a state budget that truly reflects the critical wants and needs of our most vulnerable citizens. In order to achieve this, however, we ask them to put politics aside and take all opinions into account before sending their version of the next biennial budget to the governor.

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About AARP

AARP is the nation’s largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With a nationwide presence and nearly 38 million members, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to families: health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also produces the nation’s largest circulation publications: AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org or follow @AARP and @AARPadvocates on social media.