

Disability Rights Wisconsin Encouraged by Changes to Long Term Care Proposal

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 15, 2015

Contact: Lisa Pugh lisa.pugh@drwi.org or Kit Kerschensteiner kitk@drwi.org (608) 267-0214

Disability Rights Wisconsin is encouraged by yesterday's announcement of the Joint Finance Committee's intention to remove the Governor's proposed changes to Wisconsin's long-term care system from the state budget. We thank Joint Finance Committee Co-Chairs Darling and Nygren, as well as Representative Knudson and Senator Vukmir for their commitment to strong legislative oversight and public and stakeholder input in developing future improvements to long term care.

Lawmakers heard the voices of consumers, advocates, and stakeholders who had raised the alarm about the detrimental impact the proposed changes would have on participants and Wisconsin's current successful and cost-effective programs. The Committee action acknowledges the significant role these programs play in the lives of more than 55,000 Wisconsinites and the importance of including participants, their families, current MCO's, providers and advocates in the consideration of any potential long-term care reform.

While heartened by this first step of removing the Governor's proposal from the budget, Disability Rights Wisconsin remains concerned about the future of Wisconsin's long term care system. "The specific requirements contained in yesterday's announcement did not reassure us that future consideration of potential changes will include a commitment to sustain those elements of Wisconsin's current system that are working and successful," says DRW Managing Attorney Kit Kerschensteiner. "Let's not just cast aside those things that have been proven to do a good job of meeting members' needs and are cost-effective as well." DRW will continue to advocate for a separate IRIS Medicaid waiver program, a regional system that provides a path for existing regional homegrown managed care organizations to continue, locally-based, county-run ADRCs performing all the functions of an ADRC, and the existing Partnership integrated model.

"We need to understand and target the true cost drivers in Medicaid and long term care in order to plan for the future. Taxpayers are depending on us to get this right. Let's not presume we have the right answer before sitting down together with all stakeholders. The Wisconsin tradition is rolling up our sleeves and working together at the same table," stated Lisa Pugh, Disability Rights Wisconsin's Public Policy Director. Disability Rights Wisconsin looks forward to working with the Department of Health Services, Joint Finance and stakeholders to make refinements that build on and improve our current system so that it can remain sustainable for future generations.

###

MADISON

131 W. Wilson St.
Suite 700
Madison, WI 53703

608 267-0214
608 267-0368 FAX

MILWAUKEE

6737 West Washington St.
Suite 3230
Milwaukee, WI 53214

414 773-4646
414 773-4647 FAX

RICE LAKE

217 West Knapp St.
Rice Lake, WI 54868

715 736-1232
715 736-1252 FAX

disabilityrightswi.org

800 928-8778 consumers & family