DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS

JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Republicans Continue to Sell Wisconsin Long-Term Care to the Highest Bidder

No evidence to demonstrate the need to overhaul Family Care and upend the lives of 60,000

MADISON – Just one year ago, legislative Republicans on the Joint Finance Committee voted lock-step with Governor Walker to eliminate Wisconsin's current long-term care program as it exists today. Previously referred to as a "national model" for its cost efficiency and effectiveness in supporting those with disabilities and the frail elderly, Family Care and IRIS provide needed care and services to nearly 60,000 Wisconsinites. The Family Care 2.0 concept paper was sent to Joint Committee on Finance in early April. The concept paper requires JFC approval before it can sent to the Federal government for approval. However, due to uncertainty about cost savings and whether a complete overhaul of the program is even necessary, no action has yet been taken.

Legislative Republicans made bold promises that "reforms" to the program would save money and that services for Wisconsin's frail, elderly community and people with disabilities would not change. Despite receiving little to no support from stakeholders, unsubstantiated claims of cost savings and abysmal newspaper editorials across Wisconsin, Governor Walker is moving full-steam ahead with an overhaul of the program.

"It's tragic that legislative Republicans disregarded individuals with disabilities and our seniors before voting for this disaster that they've been pursuing since last May. The questions they are now asking should have been asked one year ago. In the interim, they have put countless individuals and families through immeasurable stress, in not even knowing if they're going to have the support they need every day to live independently. This never should have happened," said Rep. Chris Taylor (D-Madison).

"DHS' own report indicates that Family Care is a cost-effective, national model. Overhauling a $2 billion program that cares for almost 60,000 Wisconsinites without proving it saves money or increases services, is one of the most heartbreaking, irresponsible decisions made by legislative Republicans this session. Why fix what's not broken? DHS cannot achieve cost savings in this program, keep out-of-state insurance companies and their shareholders happy, and expect that there will be no changes or cuts to services or the level of care people are currently receiving," said Sen. Jon Erpenbach (D-Middleton).

“Even though Governor Walker and his administration will not fulfill the open records request about who is behind this proposal - it’s no secret who is driving the train here. The big health insurance companies saw an opportunity for profit and asked for the changes when no one else did. They wanted three regions and they got three regions. They didn’t want a statutory cap on profits and there isn’t one. Health insurance companies and their lobbyists are now the only ones pushing for a vote on this proposal when it is clear we have problems and long-term care advocates are asking for more certainty and clarification. What’s wrong with this picture?” said Rep. Gordon Hintz (D-Oshkosh).

“Government is supposed to help those less fortunate, not exploit them so someone can turn a buck. Team Walker talked up Family Care as a national model and then threw 60,000 lives into uncertainty with this change,” said Sen. Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee).

The Joint Finance Committee must vote to approve the changes proposed by DHS in order for them to move forward.

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