



P.O. Box 7863, Madison, Wisconsin 53707

July 7, 2021

Governor Tony Evers
Wisconsin State Capitol
P.O. Box 7863
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Governor Evers:

The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations has reviewed the state budget passed by the Legislature. As the Governor's office considers its veto options, disability advocates request the Governor use veto authority to restore the cuts to mass transit operating assistance and consider ways to veto or partially veto the income tax cuts that reduce revenues by \$2.37 billion and will negatively impact revenues for future budget cycles.

Survival Coalition reiterates the importance of robust public transit as a means for nondrivers—including people with disabilities, older adults, and low-income caregivers—to commute to work and live independently. Especially as Wisconsin recovers from the pandemic, it is critical that public transit systems remain a viable option for those returning to work or reengaging with business and service sectors as consumers. Survival Coalition believe the cuts to Tier A systems in year one of the budget may be restored via line-item veto, and we encourage the Governor to take this step.

Survival Coalition is concerned the income tax cut included in this budget will reduce revenues for future state budgets and put increasing pressure on programs that rely on state funds. People with disabilities and older adults rely on many services that are partially or fully supported by state tax revenues, including but not limited to Medicaid funded long term care, mental health services, ADRC services, general and special education, public transportation, and employment services through DVR. The income tax cut would result in significant and ongoing reductions in revenue that will increase pressure to cut or reduce services in the next budget cycle and beyond. This will disproportionately impact people with disabilities, older adults, low-income workers, and people of color.

Disability advocates are disappointed to see the final budget passed by the Legislature removed many items important to people with disabilities and their families—including lead abatement, significant investments in special education, funding for guardian training, most of the recommendations from the Governor's Task Force on Caregiving, sum sufficient funding for the children's long term support program, increased support for specific mental health crisis response, full funding for ADRCs, ABLE accounts, funding for transit capitol improvement, and others. A veto cannot reinsert items the Legislature has removed. However, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars may be used to advance many of the Governor's priorities that were excluded from the state budget.

Survival Coalition remains especially concerned the mechanism the Legislature used to meet federal Maintenance of Effort requirements for K-12 education does not ensure dollars intended for public schools remediating the effects of the pandemic will reach students. This budget fails to raise school revenue limits. Under Wisconsin's school funding formula, most state dollars will be inaccessible to school districts this fiscal year and will be redirected to property tax cuts, depriving students of any actual education support from those dollars.

While we do not believe this dangerous precedent can be undone with a veto, we believe Congress can take corrective action. Survival Coalition and other disability organizations have sent formal communications to Sen. Baldwin and Rep. Pocan requesting Congress close loopholes that allow states to work around Congressional intent. Similar communications from the Governor's office and Department of Public Instruction would be valuable to elevate attention on this egregious action and encourage Congress to take steps to prevent it from happening again or even becoming a blueprint for other states to shortchange their most vulnerable students.

Survival Coalition is comprised of more than 30 statewide disability organizations, and has members with expertise in disability law, research and best practices, and providing direct services for people with disabilities.

Survival Co-Chairs:

Beth Swedeen, beth.swedeen@wisconsin.gov; (608) 220-2924;

Kristin M. Kerschensteiner, kitk@drwi.org; (608) 267-0214;

Lisa Pugh, pugh@thearc.org; (608) 422-4250