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**WISCONSIN BOARD FOR PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
THANKS DHS FOR WITHDRAWING PLANNED CHANGES TO FAMILY CARE/IRIS**

Madison, WI – Yesterday's announcement by Secretary Kitty Rhoades that the WI Department of Health Services is withdrawing its concept plan from consideration by Joint Finance is a welcome move that demonstrates the Department has listened to long-term care participants and their families.

"The Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD) thanks the Department and legislators who listened to the many stories, as well as heard and used many recommendations from the disability community in efforts to improve quality and contain costs in Family Care and IRIS," said Beth Swedeen, Executive Director.

Swedeen says the letter from Secretary Rhoades to Joint Finance co-chairs Sen. Alberta Darling and Rep. John Nygren shows that the collective voice of the disability community was heard and respected.

"We appreciate the effort the Department put into listening to stakeholders at public hearings, listening sessions, and in collecting written feedback," Swedeen said.

Secretary Rhoades' letter indicates that the Department's decision was heavily influenced by feedback from the 60,000 participants who are dependent on Family Care and IRIS to live and participate in their homes and communities.

Swedeen said the disability community wants to continue working with the Department and the Legislature to improve the current Family Care and IRIS programs that are nationally recognized as models for delivering long-term supports in cost effective, person-centered ways.

"Long-term care participants realize that containing costs while building on quality care are both essential to the future of Family Care and IRIS," Swedeen said. "No group is more invested in making meaningful changes and keeping costs down while improving quality than the people who use the programs."

Swedeen said, "BPDD shares Secretary Rhoades' commitment to a coordinated, outcome-based care model that meets all of an individual's care needs."

Swedeen encourages the disability community to thank the Department and legislators for listening to their concerns, and to continue to communicate the importance of long-term care and ideas for improvements to Wisconsin's policymakers in the months ahead.

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