Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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The Survival Coalition of more than 30 disability organizations thanks the Joint Finance Committee leadership for its decision to remove proposed long-term care changes from the budget. We thank the Legislature for listening to the thousands of Wisconsin residents who have expressed concerns since the budget was announced Feb. 3 about changes to Wisconsin's cost-effective, high-quality long-term care system.

“Families and people with disabilities can take a deep breath and know that Wisconsin’s current long-term care system will not be replaced with a model that has not yet been proven cost-effective in other states,” said Beth Swedeen, Survival Coalition co-chair.

“While questions remain about the details of yesterday’s proposal, we are pleased to see the commitment to legislative oversight and stakeholder involvement. Advocates, people with disabilities, and families stand ready to work with the Legislature every step of the way.”

Survival Coalition joins other advocacy groups in its continued concern that the Joint Finance Committee's new proposal does not ensure that the existing elements of Wisconsin's long-term care system will continue. It does not necessarily preserve IRIS as a separate program. It also does not ensure continuation of non-profit MCOs or county-based ADRCs as they exist today. It is also unclear after yesterday’s announcement whether current Family Care/IRIS will expand into the final 8 counties of the state.

“The potential for small changes in Wisconsin’s long-term care system to have significant unintended consequences is always a concern,” said Kit Kerschensteiner, Survival co-chair.

“It is critical that a full and robust discussion of any changes include all stakeholders—including long-term care participants, their families, current MCOs and providers, and advocates. That's how our current system was built in the past 15 years, and that's the direction Wisconsin needs to take in the future."

Family Care and IRIS have been highly-rated by participants; have driven down long-term care's overall portion of the state's Medicaid budget, and saved hundreds of millions of dollars over the past decade. A Family Care audit in late 2013 projected an additional $34 million in savings over the next decade. The expansion to northeastern counties this biennium is slated to save $10 million.