

2017-2019 Biennial Budget Priorities for Wisconsinites with Disabilities

Disability Rights Wisconsin asks policy makers to support the following priorities for Wisconsinites with disabilities in the 2017-2019 Biennial Budget. These programs and services are vitally important to Wisconsin adults and children with disabilities and support opportunities to live, work, learn, and enjoy life in the community.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES



Eliminates wait lists for the Medicaid Children's Long Term Support Medical Waiver (\$39 million)

Extends services to the 2,200 children with physical, developmental, or emotional disabilities currently waiting for long-term supports and services. This is 43% of the children who are eligible for these crucial long-term supports.

EDUCATION



Increases per pupil aid for our schools (\$450 per pupil FY2018 and \$654 per pupil FY2019)

This increase will help support students with disabilities with the portion of their education that they receive in the regular education classroom.



Invests in school mental health initiatives (\$7 million)

Provides vital support for students with mental health needs, including increasing social workers in school, collaborating with community providers for mental health services, training for school personnel, and early intervention programs in some Milwaukee schools.



No increase in special education categorical aid

DRW recommends appropriating \$87 million for the school levy tax credit in 2018 to provide an increase in special education categorical aid – the first increase in almost a decade.

EMPLOYMENT



Funds the Transition Incentives Grant and the Transition Readiness Investment Grant (\$7.6 million)

Supports employment for young people with disabilities.



Improves the Medical Assistance Purchase Plan (MAPP)

Allows individuals with high medical, remedial, and long-term care expenses to spend down to become eligible for MAPP and ends the high premium cliff for MAPP participants at the higher income levels. Increases the elderly, blind, and disabled medically needy income limit which will mean more people with disabilities will become eligible for Medicaid instead of needing to purchase it through MAPP.

CARE IN THE COMMUNITY



Increases the rate for Medicaid personal care services, supporting quality care in the community (2% each year of the biennium; \$6,197,100 in state funds, \$15 million all funds)

This increase will raise the rate to \$16.40/hour (2017) and \$16.73/hour (2018). The rate has not been increased since 2008. However, a larger rate increase is needed to address the caregiver shortage crisis.

MENTAL HEALTH



Increases funding to expand the Child Psychiatry Consultation Program (\$500,000/year)

Improves access for children and adolescents.

MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUED



Funds a peer-run respite for Veterans in Milwaukee (\$450,000 total)

Supports recovery and independence.



Expands the Opening Avenues to Reentry Success (OARS) program to five more counties (\$660,800/year)

Provides reentry support for prison inmates with a mental illness.



Creates a new corrections mental illness treatment and diversion unit (\$2.2 million total) and adds mental health staff for restrictive housing units at three DOC facilities (\$592,000 total)

Provides needed supports and staff in corrections.

Expands mental health staff and services at the Department of Corrections Copper Lakes School for girls (\$556,000 total), additional staffing at Lincoln Hills (\$1,306,800), and funding for staff for safe distribution of medication to the juvenile population (\$158,900)

Although these improvements are needed, the status quo is not working. A stakeholder group should be convened to review Wisconsin's entire juvenile corrections system to determine best practices to reduce recidivism and promote success in the community.

**NEEDS
WORK**

TRANSPORTATION

**NEEDS
WORK**

Increases funding for the County and Tribal Specialized Transportation Assistance Program for older adults and people with disabilities (Sec. 85.21 by \$278,300 FY2017, \$562,200 FY2018; Sec. 85.22 by \$148,500/year)

This is a start but the increasing population eligible for these services justifies a greater investment.

**NEEDS
WORK**

No new support for public transit

DRW recommends restoring Transit Operating Aids to maintain public transit services. Recent reductions in state operating assistance have shifted nearly \$17 million in costs to municipalities, increased passenger fares, and forced cuts to transit – all which affect public transit vital to job access.

EMPLOYMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

**NEEDS
WORK**

Eliminates the Labor and Industry Review Commission (LIRC)

This Commission for appeals of Equal Rights Division, workers' compensation, and unemployment compensation cases should continue. It provides a relatively quick and easy appeal process and has developed expertise in these areas, which would be unmatched in a direct appeal of the agency decision to the circuit court.

**NEEDS
WORK**

Limits employment rights of people with disabilities, and other protected classes, under the Wisconsin Fair Employment Act and the Wisconsin Family Medical Leave Act

Decreases an employee's ability to receive an award to reimburse them for their own attorney's fees and increases situations where they could be liable for their employer's attorney's fees. Unless they have resources to pay their attorney out of their own pocket, they may not have representation to defend their rights.

CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES



Provides grants to the Wisconsin Trust Account Foundation, Inc. for civil legal services to low-income families. (\$500,000/year)

www.disabilityrightswi.org

Toll-free phone number: 800-928-8778

For more information, contact Amy Devine, Public Policy Coordinator at 608-267-0214

