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For Immediate Release

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Disability Rights Wisconsin Responds to State of the State Address

Madison, WI- Governor Walker’s State of the State address highlighted his strong support for several areas affecting the lives of people with disabilities including ending waiting lists for children with disabilities, expanding the Family Care and IRIS programs state-wide, and advancing employment opportunities.

“Wisconsin has made great strides in increasing access to home and community-based supports for adults and children with disabilities,” said Daniel Idzikowski, Executive Director. DRW asks policy makers to prioritize the needs of children with disabilities and their families who desperately need supportive services. Redesigning this system so no children are placed on waiting lists, coupled with an end to the 10-year moratorium on increased special education funding will provide a positive path forward for all of our children and our economy.

DRW supports the intent of the Governor’s initiative to redesign the juvenile justice system by closing Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake, which has failed some of our most traumatized children. “While this is a promising direction, it is imperative that the state provide a sufficient investment to ensure youth have the services and supports they need for rehabilitation, including a full continuum of mental health and educational supports, including special education services,” said Managing Attorney Kit Kerschensteiner. Funding for new facilities will not be meaningful unless it is accompanied by a new model of juvenile justice. More robust oversight will be essential to ensure an environment where youth are safe from abuse.

Disability Rights Wisconsin strongly supports full coverage for people with pre-existing conditions; however, asks that policy makers proceed carefully to ensure that people with preexisting conditions are not discriminated against-either in access, premium setting, or cost sharing. Penalizing people who have a coverage gap by allowing health plans to charge higher rates is not an acceptable policy, particularly for people with disabilities who have struggled with maintaining coverage.

As policy makers consider welfare reform proposals, we ask them to proceed with caution. Research indicates that disproportionately many people hurt by work requirements in these programs are people with disabilities, those with chronic health conditions and caregivers.

“Disability Rights Wisconsin was pleased to see so many people with disabilities and their families recognized by Governor Walker. We look forward to working with the Governor and Legislature to pursue policies and initiatives that will continue to move Wisconsin forward to a state where all people with disabilities can enjoy the full extent of their rights and the highest quality of life,” commented Idzikowski.

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*Disability Rights Wisconsin is the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy system for the State of Wisconsin.*

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