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**June 14, 2017 / FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## ***New scorecard gives WI high marks for serving older adults, people with disabilities***

*More must be done to improve long-term service/supports*

**MADISON, WISCONSIN** – Wisconsin ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in the country when it comes to meeting the long-term care needs of older residents and people with disabilities, but AARP cautions that more must be done to improve services and meet changing demographic demands across the state.

Specific areas of concern in Wisconsin include increasing state support for family caregivers. This, according to a new, comprehensive state-by-state Scorecard from AARP with support of the nation's leading organizations behind quality long-term care, The Commonwealth Fund and SCAN Foundation.

***Picking Up the Pace of Change: A State Scorecard on Long-Term Services and Supports for Older Adults, People with Physical Disabilities, and Family Caregivers*** – ranks each state overall and on 25 specific indicators in 5 key dimensions: affordability and access; choice of setting and provider; quality of life and quality of care; support for family caregivers; and, effective transitions between nursing homes, hospitals and homes.

“The vast majority of older Wisconsinites want to live independently, at home, as they age – most with the help of unpaid family caregivers,” said Sam Wilson, State Director of AARP Wisconsin, which serves more than 840,000 members age 50 and older in Wisconsin.

AARP Wisconsin supports creating a tax credit for families paying out of pocket for caregiver expenses to help support keeping loved ones in their homes. Expanding respite programs and short-term respite facilities would also help reduce caregiver stress, Wilson said.

"Even facing tight budgets, Wisconsin is making clear progress to help our older residents achieve that goal. However, this Scorecard shows we have more to do, and we need to pick up the pace," Wilson said. "That's why we're also fighting for the Caregiver, Advise, Record, Enable (CARE) Act. This act, which has been passed in more than 30 states, would require providers of health services to keep the caregiver informed and involve them in treatment options."

Today, unpaid family caregivers provide the bulk of care for older Wisconsinites in part because the cost of long-term care remains unaffordable for most middle income families.

In Wisconsin, approximately 578,000 residents help their aging parents, spouses and other loved ones stay at home by providing assistance with bathing and dressing, transportation, finances, complex medical tasks like wound care and injections, and more. The value of this unpaid care totals about \$7 billion.

"When it comes to helping older Wisconsinites live in the setting of their choice, family caregivers take on big responsibilities," Wilson said. "Many juggle full-time jobs with their caregiving duties; others provide 24/7 care for their loved ones.

According to the Scorecard, Wisconsin has made progress to improve long-term services and supports for older adults and people with disabilities. But proposals in Washington, D.C. to drastically cut federal funding for Medicaid would threaten these advancements, likely resulting in our most vulnerable citizens losing the lifesaving supports that they count on, Wilson said.

"This Scorecard gives us a snapshot of how well Wisconsin serves our older residents, those with disabilities, and family caregivers – and shows us where we must sharpen our focus to better assist hardworking Wisconsinites. Now is the time for policymakers to act," Wilson said.

Of the 25 Scorecard indicators, many may be improved through state policy changes, pointing to the importance of AARP's multi-state advocacy campaign, launched in 2014, to help older Americans live independently, at home, and the family caregivers that support them.

The Scorecard highlights that in less than 10 years, Boomers will begin to turn 80, placing new expectations and demands on a still imperfect long-term care system. Further, this generation will have far fewer potential family caregivers to provide unpaid help.

The full state Scorecard, along with an interactive map of state rankings and information, is available at [www.longtermscorecard.org](http://www.longtermscorecard.org).

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