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For Immediate Release

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The Senate's Health Care Bill Will Make Devastating Cuts to Medicaid

Disability Rights Wisconsin, Wisconsin's designated Protection and Advocacy system for people with disabilities, has serious concerns regarding the Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA), including the impact of devastating cuts to Medicaid. The Senate's bill would repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, gut \$772 billion from Medicaid, lead to loss of health insurance coverage for 22 million Americans, and roll back protections for people with pre-existing conditions while providing generous tax cuts to our wealthiest citizens. Long-term, the Senate bill caps and cuts federal funding for the Medicaid program at an even deeper rate than the House bill, ending the current guarantee of a 60% federal match from the federal government. As a result of these extreme cuts, states will have to consider eliminating programs, cutting provider rates, reducing benefits, or establishing waiting lists for the wide range of Medicaid services children and adults with disabilities rely on.

Wisconsin's Medicaid program is a lifeline to 1.2 million children and adults on Medicaid. Wisconsin has a cost-effective Medicaid system and will be harmed for being an innovative leader in providing services for children and adults with disabilities to live and work in the community, instead of being forced into nursing homes or institutions. Daniel Idzikowski, DRW Executive Director, said, "Last week was the 18th anniversary of the historic *Olmstead v. L.C.* decision, where the U.S. Supreme Court declared that adults and children with disabilities have a civil right under the Americans with Disabilities Act to participate and live in their communities. The BCRA's devastating cuts to Medicaid threaten this very right. The right to community living and integration means nothing if these cuts are passed."

Allowing states to make essential health benefits optional would affect 2.5 million Wisconsinites with pre-existing conditions. "Without the protections of mandatory essential benefits in insurance plans, such as prescription drugs, hospitalization, outpatient services, mental health services, and substance use disorder treatment, the progress Wisconsin has made in expanding community services, including addressing mental health needs in our state, is in jeopardy," stated Barbara Beckert, Milwaukee Office Director. High risk insurance pools, often suggested as an option for people with pre-existing conditions, have been tested in Wisconsin and failed to provide affordable, comprehensive insurance coverage for many people with pre-existing conditions.

The legislative process thus far has not allowed for public input or analysis. The lack of an open process is disturbing because the proposed changes will deeply affect people with disabilities, the elderly, and children, as well one-sixth of the economy. "We need to take more time to address the cost-drivers in our health care system without fundamentally changing the structure of the entire Medicaid program," stated Amy Devine, Public Policy Coordinator. DRW strongly opposes any proposal to dilute the protections now afforded people with disabilities through the Affordable Care Act, including cuts to Medicaid, and calls on the U.S. Senate to oppose the Better Care Reconciliation Act.

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