

July 3, 2019



The **Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network** is a collaborative group of individuals and associations working with and for Wisconsin's older adults to shape public policy to improve their quality of life.

Core member organizations:

Aging and Disability Professionals Association of Wisconsin (*ADPAW*)

Alzheimer's Association SE Wisconsin Chapter

Wisconsin Adult Day Services Association (*WADSA*)

Wisconsin Association of Area Agencies on Aging (*W4A*)

Wisconsin Association of Benefit Specialists (*WABS*)

Wisconsin Association of Nutrition Directors (*WAND*)

Wisconsin Association of Senior Centers (*WASC*)

Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (*WIHA*)

Wisconsin Senior Corps Association (*WISCA*)

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State Budget Addresses Several Aging Network Priorities and Leaves Some Behind

(Madison, WI) The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) expresses appreciation to the Governor and the state legislature for their support of several budget priorities impacting older adults and caregivers in the 2019-2021 biennial state budget. "WAAN appreciates the investments made in this budget to support the state's older adult population, family caregivers, and the direct care workers who assist those in need of care," stated Robert Kellerman, executive director of the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources and WAAN spokesperson. "While we are disappointed funding for several essential services that support older adults' ability to remain independent and living in their own homes was not secured in this budget, we look forward to continuing our work with policy makers on investments that improve the quality of life for older Wisconsinites."

Aging- and caregiver-related issues addressed in the 2019-2021 state budget include:

- **Board on Aging and Long-Term Care:** Adding two new positions – one lead ombudsman and one assistant supervisor to address the increasing number of people eligible for ombudsman services and the increase in high skill level and time-involved cases.
- **Direct Care Workforce Support:**
 - a) Personal Care Worker Grants to help promote the attraction and retention of personal care workers who provide home- and community-based care;
 - b) increasing the Medicaid personal care (MAPC) rate by 9% in the first year and an additional 3% in the second year (raising the rate by over \$2.00/hour);
 - c) increasing direct care supplemental payments to Family Care managed care organizations (MCOs) by \$27 million (state funds) over the biennium to offer additional funding for Family Care providers to increase wages/benefits to direct care workers; and
 - d) increasing the nursing home daily reimbursement rate by 7.4% to help support workers who provide direct care.
- **SeniorCare Prescription Drug Assistance Program:** Approving funding to continue this cost-effective, easy to access and use program.
- **Dementia Care Specialists:** Expanding the Dementia Care Specialist program by nine (9) additional Dementia Care Specialists (DCSs) – eight ADRC DCSs and one tribal DCS to expand services – specialized education, in-home consultation, volunteer development, and community coalition building - to additional older adults, family caregivers, and communities.

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- **Division of Quality Assurance, Bureau of Assisted Living (BAL):** Adding six (6) permanent positions within the BAL to address the increased workload for staff resulting from changes in federal regulations, increases in the number of assisted living facilities, and the complexity of the care needs of those accessing assisted living services.
- **Transportation:** Increasing funding in three areas:
 - a) Mass transit (s.85.20): 2% in CY 2021 and thereafter for each tier of mass transit systems;
 - b) Specialized transportation – County Elderly and Disabled Transportation Assistance program (s.85.21): 10.4%; and
 - c) Specialized transportation – Tribal Elderly Transportation Assistance program (s.85.215): 10%.

Additional work is needed to ensure the care needs of our state's most vulnerable population can be met. We support addressing the direct care workforce shortage by expanding affordable health care coverage and providing paid family and medical leave to these workers. Additional support is also needed for family caregivers. The care they provide helps our families, our communities, and health and long-term care systems. We look forward to continuing to address these concerns with the legislature and through the Governor's Task Force on Caregiving.

Lastly, members of the aging network will continue to work with policy-makers in both the legislative and the executive branches to secure much needed funding to support:

- a) the delivery of evidence-based health promotion programs for older adults and caregivers. These programs improve health, prevent or delay disease and disability and the need for expensive long-term care, yet there has been minimal state investment in these researched and proven programs.
- b) the legal advocacy services for Wisconsin adults age 60+ provided by the Elder Benefit Specialist program. Elder Benefit Specialists help with benefit information in the areas of health care, prescription drug coverage, income supplements, housing, food assistance and more. State funding for this critical program has not increased in over 20 years despite an increase of over 60% in the population served, increasing need for services, and increasing complexities associated with access to essential benefit programs.

The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network is a collaborative group of 10 statewide associations and numerous individuals working with and for Wisconsin's older adults to shape public policy to improve their quality of life.

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