



For Immediate Release
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The Arc Wisconsin Reacts to Signing of the State Budget: Outlines Impacts on People with Disabilities

Madison, WI – People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families across Wisconsin have a lot to celebrate with today’s signing of the state budget into law but will continue to fight for critical issues that were not addressed.

“Investments in personal care and Family Care workers were badly needed,” says Lisa Pugh, State Director. “The additional funding comes just in time to keep personal care agencies from closing and to help people keep their trusted workers who help them with everything from eating, to dressing, bathing and getting out in the community.” Unfortunately, a similar increase to help increase wages for workers in the IRIS program was not approved in the budget.

While increases in special education funding were passed, the amount was not what The Arc Wisconsin and families of students with disabilities across the state needed. “We applaud the additional funds outlined by the Governor’s partial veto to get more money to schools through per pupil aids. This will help all students.”

Other important areas addressed in this budget for people with I/DD and their families:

- \$91 million increase to the hourly rate for personal care agencies – badly needed to keep personal care agencies open and to support wage increases for workers.
- \$66.5 million increase in Family Care workforce funds (on top of the last biennial budget increase.) This will help provide retention bonuses and wage increases to workers who provide direct care supports to people in the Family Care program. (No similar increase for IRIS.)
- Increase in special education funding to get the state to a 30% reimbursement for actual costs (currently 25% and decreasing). This is the first increase in 10 years; but significantly lower than the 60% increase that was needed and supported by the bi-partisan Blue-Ribbon Commission.
- \$250,000 increase in respite care funding for family caregivers – the first increase in 20 years.
- Increase in funding to end the Children’s Long-Term Support waiting list, in addition to other important reforms to the intake process that will streamline the program for families in need of help.
- \$2.5 million over the biennium to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for dental services provided to people with intellectual and physical disabilities. A larger and necessary increase for all dental providers to take more Medicaid patients was not approved by the legislature.

- Funds to continue the expansion of the Project SEARCH program that provides important employment training opportunities for youth with disabilities in many Wisconsin communities.
- 10% increase in transit aids for people with disabilities and older adults.

The Arc Wisconsin will continue to advocate for those items that were neglected in this state budget. We applaud both the Governor and bi-partisan legislature for hearing the needs of the disability community in many areas.

The Arc Wisconsin advocates for and serves people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD), including Down syndrome, autism, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, cerebral palsy and other diagnoses. The Arc Wisconsin has 15 local chapters and is connected to a network of more than 650 chapters across the country promoting and protecting the human rights of people with I/DD and actively supporting their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes and without regard to diagnosis.

Editor's Note: The Arc is not an acronym; always refer to us as The Arc, not The ARC and never ARC. The Arc should be considered as a title or a phrase.