



# Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

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## VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

October 23, 2023

Chairperson Janice Wilberg, Ph.D.  
Milwaukee County Commission on Aging  
1220 West Vliet Street, Suite 300  
Milwaukee, WI 53205

Dear Chairperson Wilberg:

Thank you for taking the time to reach out to my office regarding the important work the Advocacy Committee of the Commission on Aging is doing to combat ageism in Milwaukee County. Aging and older adults play an active role in communities across the state by dedicating their time to serving others and imparting their wisdom upon future generations, and it is critical to address the challenges that so many members of our aging community face each day.

As you said in your letter, aging and older adults are a powerful and valuable population in Wisconsin—I agree. And it is among the reasons why supporting aging and older adults and addressing the challenges facing aging and older Wisconsinites has been a consistent priority for me and my administration. For example, the 2023-25 biennial budget made several investments designed to provide aging and older adults with the resources and care they need to live in comfort and with dignity and respect, including:

- Fully funding the Board on Aging and Long-Term Care’s Medigap Helpline, which provides seniors with information on the health insurance options available to them.
- Providing \$2.5 million GPR in fiscal year 2023-24 and more than \$5 million GPR in fiscal year 2024-25 to increase funding for Aging and Disability Resource Centers, which serve as a vital bridge between Wisconsin families and systems of care.
- Allocating \$225,000 annually to increase funding available for home delivered meals, in partnership with Area Agencies on Aging.
- Providing an 11.6 percent increase in funding for the seniors and individuals with disabilities specialized assistance program, which aids eligible applications in Wisconsin’s rural and small urban areas with transit capital and operating projects that serve seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- Investing \$275 million to create a residential housing infrastructure loan fund, which can be used to support loans for public infrastructure improvements associated with the construction of workforce or senior housing.
- Investing \$100 million to create a commercial-to-housing conversion revolving loan fund to support loans for projects that convert vacant nonresidential properties to workforce or senior housing.

Unfortunately, the legislature neglected to fund proposals that would have made the most recent budget even stronger for aging and older adults, including:

- Allocating \$1,060,000 GPR to build a centralized aging and disability resource center website and database that is accessible to Wisconsinites statewide, providing access to information about long-term care supports and services from the comfort of their home while also providing aging and disability resource centers with a database that centers on the individual, rather than the facility.
- Providing \$600,000 annually for a grant to an entity that conducts programs in healthy aging.
- Investing \$100,000 annually increase funding for the Alzheimer's disease training and information grants.

Additionally, as you know, I have also made expanding BadgerCare a cornerstone of all three biennial budgets I have introduced—in addition to numerous efforts outside of the biennial budget process—along with provisions like greater investments in Family Care, home and community-based care, and SeniorCare that would make in-home care and life-saving prescriptions more affordable. Unfortunately, the Joint Committee on Finance has either removed or greatly reduced these provisions in each budget cycle.

Among significant challenges facing aging and older Wisconsinites includes the effects dementia is having on our aging population as well as their families, caregivers, and communities. I have made it a priority to further develop Wisconsin's dementia care system. Partners across the state are working to create the 2024-2028 State Dementia Plan, which aims to address the factors that exacerbate dementia-related health disparities, create awareness and education opportunities in our communities, promote high quality care, prioritize independence and autonomy, and encourage collaboration between systems of care to ensure the highest levels of care. Addressing Alzheimer's and dementia is also an issue that Kathy and I feel personally passionate about. Kathy has spent her time as First Lady raising awareness of Alzheimer's disease and dementia, working to create communities that are safe and understanding of the disease and those impacted by it. Additionally, the 2023-25 biennial budget increased funding for the Alzheimer's family and caregiver support program by \$250,000 annually.

It is also important to recognize that stereotypes about aging and older adults are harmful to this important work we are doing together and must be something we continue to challenge and address across our state. By supporting older adults in accessing healthcare, housing, and financial security, we are ensuring that Wisconsin's aging and older adults have the autonomy, independence, and support they deserve to continue playing a vital role in our communities, our workforce, and our economy, too.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to the important work that groups like the Commission on Aging do to positively impact the lives of aging and older Wisconsinites in every corner of our state. Thank you for your partnership and for uplifting the challenges and needs facing this community through your advocacy work and action.

Sincerely,



Tony Evers  
Governor