



Milwaukee County

Commission on Aging

State Budget Priorities
2019-2020 Wisconsin Biennial Budget

Caregiver Support

1. Direct Care Workforce

Background: Wisconsin faces a severe shortage and high turnover of workers providing intimate and critical care and supports for frail elders and people with disabilities – in both residential care and home and community-based settings. Without an available, high quality workforce, Wisconsin will break its promise to care for its elders most in need in the least restrictive setting.

Solution: Increase Wisconsin's Medicaid reimbursement rate for direct care workers.

- Increase the Medicaid rate so that Personal Care workers would earn \$15.00 per hour.
 - Budget Impact: Increasing the MA PC agency rate from \$16.73 per hour to \$23.00, increasing base GPR by approximately \$114,000,000. If Medicaid expansion were approved, with a 90% federal match, GPR needed would be reduced to \$27,759,750.
 - Ensure that the increased fee for service rate is passed on to personal care workers providing care through Home and Community Based Services managed care by mandating changes to MCO capitated rates and contractual language.
- Increase the Medicaid rate for other direct care workers to reach \$15.00 per hour.

2. Family Caregivers

Background: Family and friends constitute the main support system for older adults, including individuals with dementia and other significant healthcare needs. Wisconsin has over 578,000 family caregivers, and nearly 80 percent of these caregivers spend an average of \$7,000 per year on caregiving expenses (in addition to providing billions of dollars of uncompensated care). Costs associated with caregiving create a significant strain for low-income caregivers who can spend up to half of their annual income on caregiving. Family caregivers are valued partners in the health and long-term care network. Yet, State policy does not address caregivers own need for healthcare, employment continuity, professional support, and respite.

Solution: Provide incentives, reimbursement, support, and respite to family caregivers.

- Create a tax credit of up to \$1000 to reimburse caregivers for 50% of out of pocket costs when using their personal resources to care for a loved one.
 - Budget impact: Allowing low-income caregivers to claim this credit could decrease state income tax revenue by up to \$179 million.
- Provide working caregivers access to paid family and medical leave.
- Expand the eligibility for the Alzheimer's Family and Caregiver Support Program to households earning 400% of federal poverty level based upon caregiver household size; require that respite be included in allowable costs.

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Committed to the Independence and Dignity of Older Adults Through Advocacy, Leadership and Service



3. Dementia Care Specialists

Background: As Wisconsin's population continues to age, the incidence of dementia and dementia related illness will rise. Between 2015 and 2040, Wisconsin's projected population aged 65 and older will grow by 72%. This expected growth rate corresponds to similar increases in the number of people with dementia. Family caregivers often lack the specialized knowledge and supports necessary to understand dementia and appropriately support their loved one.

Solution: Dementia Care Specialist Program. Dementia Care Specialists in Milwaukee County provide training, and support dementia capable businesses, senior companion services, transportation providers, social service workers, and caregivers. Additionally, they support five memory cafes which provide socialization to individuals with dementia and their caregivers.

- Support ongoing funding for the DCS program and expand the program statewide.
 - Budget impact: Add an additional 13 Dementia Care Specialists, including a 2nd DCS in Milwaukee County for a total budget request of \$1,520,000 per annum.

Cost of Prescription Medication

Background: Costs for prescription medication continue to escalate, placing an increasing burden on older adults who disproportionately absorb medication costs.

Solution: Provide affordable prescription drug benefit by maintaining SeniorCare in Wisconsin. SeniorCare is Wisconsin's unique prescription drug assistance program for Wisconsin residents who are 65 years of age or older whose income does not exceed 240% of the Federal Poverty Level. Every senior enrolling in SeniorCare must pay an annual \$30 fee and a \$5 or \$15 co-payment on most medication. More than 92,000 Wisconsinites already participate in SeniorCare.

- In June 2018 Wisconsin Department of Health Services submitted a waiver application requesting a ten-year extension of SeniorCare.
 - Budget impact: Support \$19,617,200 GPR in FY20 and \$23,607,100 GPR in FY21 to maintain the SeniorCare benefit.

Transportation for Older Adults

Background: Milwaukee County's transportation infrastructure is challenged to meet the growing needs of older adults. Fourteen percent of Milwaukee County households do not have a personal vehicle and must rely on alternative transit. Expanded bus routes are needed to allow older adults and people with disabilities to work, volunteer, shop, and socialize. Additional revenue sources are needed to adequately fund a transportation infrastructure that allows older adults to meet their daily needs.

Solution: Support additional GPR funding that would hold all affected counties harmless from funding cuts through the revised distribution formula.

- Support a one percent dedicated sales tax for public transit, parks and emergency medical services.

- Increase funding for public transit (85.20 program) by 10% in FY20 to account for growth in user population and demand over the past five years, with ongoing increases of at least 3.5% to account for continued growth.
 - Budget impact: \$11.1 million in FY20 and \$15.4 million in FY21.
- Increase funding for specialized transportation (85.21/85.215 program) by 10% in FY20 to account for growth in the user population and demand over the past five years and ongoing increases of at least 3.5% thereafter.
 - 85.21 Budget impact: \$1.42 million in FY20 and \$1.97 million in FY21.
 - 85.215 Budget impact: \$39,600 in FY20 and \$54,846 in FY21.
- Support incentivizing coordination among local and state-level transportation systems.
 - Provide budgetary authority to create Regional Transit Authorities.
- Support an independent advocate for individuals utilizing the Medicaid Non-Emergency Medical Transportation program.
 - Budget impact: \$140,000 in each year of the biennium.

Navigation of Supportive Services for Older Adults

Background: Wisconsin's Elderly Benefit Specialists have been providing information, assistance and advocacy for Milwaukeeans 60 and older for more than thirty years. Elderly Benefit Specialists advocate and assist older persons with every program and service for which they might be eligible. Wisconsin's EBS program, funded with Older American Act allocations, state, and local match, has not seen an increase in state funding for many years, even as the percentage of Wisconsin's elderly population has steadily increased. Moreover, since the EBS program funding is based in part on geography, Milwaukee County has many fewer EBS's in relation to 60 + population than the rest of the state. Statewide, there is about 1 benefit specialist for every 10,000 individuals 60+ (roughly 100 EBSs for 1million 60+ residents). We have about 173,000 individuals 60 + in Milwaukee County.

Solution: Increase state funding for the Elderly Benefit Specialist program.

- Add 3.0 FTE Elderly Benefit Specialist positions in Milwaukee County.
 - Budget impact: \$ 255,254
- Change the allocation formula for EBS positions to increase the total number of EBS positions by including a more accurate weighting of the population aged 60+ served by each Area Agency on Aging.

Healthy Aging

Background: By 2035, Wisconsin's population of adults over age 65 will almost double to 1.49 million. These population changes, coupled with economic pressures facing the health care system, threaten our ability to provide adequate care to this rapidly-growing population. Wisconsin has been an innovator in researching and creating new evidence-based programs and services to maintain the health and vitality of older adults, while reducing costs and preventing or delaying the need for long-term care.

Solution: Provide a \$870,000 budget appropriation each year for healthy aging grants to counties, tribes, YMCAs and other CBOs for proven local programs and to support a statewide clearinghouse and support center.

Medicaid Long Term Care & Funding

Background: Wisconsin has made great progress assisting older adults to age in place and live longer, healthier lives. As the population continues to grow older, more individuals require long term care and support. While FamilyCare, IRIS, Partnership, and PACE have helped to eliminate waiting lists for publicly funded services, the promise of the right care at the right time has not always held true. As noted above, there is a growing difficulty finding and retaining qualified long-term care workers. Moreover, while there have been Medicaid “surpluses” in the last several budgets, insufficient funds exist to provide for the needs of all people accessing Medicaid waiver services. For example, families, including grandparents, raising children with disabilities have not had access to the same promise of coverage and benefit advocacy for children’s long-term care services and supports as adults. It is time for that disparity to end. Moreover, in order to maintain the promise of Wisconsin’s long-term care system, sufficient funding must exist to provide accessible and high-quality care for all qualified participants.

Solution: Require the Department of Health Services to review funding allocations for all Medicaid long-term care programs and designate an adequate amount of funding to ensure continuing high-quality services are available to all qualified residents, regardless of age. Ensure that adequate and culturally sensitive outreach programs exist to inform, engage, and serve minority populations in long-term care services. Require the Department of Health Services to prepare the necessary waivers to apply for and accept Medicaid expansion funds and gain full federal match under the Affordable Care Act.