

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
**INTEROFFICE COMMUNICATION**

**DATE:** December 31, 2020

**TO:** Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Shakita LaGrant McClain, Director, Department of Health and Human Services  
*Prepared by Marietta Luster, Administrator, Disabilities Services Division*

**SUBJECT:** **Report from the Director, Department of Health and Human Services, requesting support for a funding increase in the 2021-2023 State biennial budget to ensure access to critical services for older adults and people with disabilities provided by Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs)**

**Issue**

The Director, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) requests support to increase funding to the State ADRC's for the 2021-2023 state biennial budget to ensure access to critical services provided by ADRC's to Wisconsin's aging and disability populations.

These provisions to increase ADRC and ancillary aging and disability programs are an example of how state funding has systemically underfunded state required services and supports in Milwaukee County. This effort aligns with the county's Fair Deal initiative to include equalization of funding for aging and disability services.

**Background and Rationale**

Milwaukee County established one of the first Aging Resource Centers (ARCs) in the nation. With the advent of an integrated long-term care system for people with disabilities and older adults, Milwaukee County led the way, as one of five pilot counties. By 2009, the county added the Disability Resource Center (DRC). The network of Wisconsin Aging and Disability Resource Centers provide:

- Outreach
- Information and Assistance Call Center
- Aging and Disability Resource and Support Referrals
- Long Term Care Functional Screening and Eligibility Determination
- Long Term Care Options and Benefits Counseling, Prevention, Wellness & Crisis Referral

During the reform of Wisconsin's long-term care system in 2001, a state workgroup examined and developed workload estimates for each Resource Center activity. These workload estimates formed the basis for the Wisconsin Legislature's Resource Center funding levels. Most Resource Center funding is derived from state general purpose revenue (GPR) with some matching

federal Medicaid funds. This state GPR funding formula did not consider the disproportionate number of people living in poverty in Milwaukee County.

In order to assure the expansion of Resource Centers statewide, Milwaukee County agreed to a formula adjustment that resulted in an underfunding of the county's allocation for its Aging Resource Center that it has never recouped. And nearly 20 years later, the Milwaukee County Aging Resource Center receives the same annual state GPR allocation of \$2,773,238. Likewise, for the DRC, the total State GPR allocation has remained the same at \$2,074,753. These GPR allocations along with county tax levy serve as match to draw down additional federal funding to support the ARC and DRC budgets. Both the ARC and DRC State contracts are submitted to the County Board for approval annually; and for 2021, were approved under Files 20-891 and 20-857, respectively.

Despite stagnant State funding, enrollment in Wisconsin's Home and Community Based long-term care system (IRIS, Family Care, Partnership, and PACE) has dramatically increased. In January of 2020, 26,920 Milwaukee County residents were enrolled in one of these publicly funded long-term care programs – 27.2 percent of the total of all Wisconsin participants. Yet, Milwaukee County only receives 13.3 percent of Wisconsin's GPR funding allocation for ADRCs.

Since the functional screening, eligibility determination, and options counseling for these programs are the responsibility of staff in the local Aging and Disability Resource Centers, Milwaukee County's caseload has been overwhelmed without the staff necessary to perform these critical functions. The ADRCs are grossly understaffed, underpaid, and struggle to meet contractual requirements to serve even the most vulnerable and economically disadvantaged residents.

Simply stated, Milwaukee County cannot provide the care, counseling, and consideration to which its residents are entitled. Recognizing this crisis, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services established an advisory group to review the state GPR allocation method for ADRCs and to determine how much additional funding is needed to fully support ADRCs statewide. This group released its recommendation in October 2020 for an additional \$27.4 million in GPR to fully fund ADRCs statewide. Under the proposed revision to the ADRC allocation methodology along with the proposed funding increase developed by the ADRC Reinvestment Workgroup, Milwaukee County's estimated allocation could potentially increase to \$13,252,608 to support its core ADRC functions.

Similarly, the Wisconsin Aging Action Network is calling for Wisconsin to double its funding of the Elder Benefits Specialist (EBS) program in Wisconsin. This program is unique in the nation and led to a revolution in access to important federal, state and local benefits by our older residents. Yet, funding of the EBS program has not increased since 1997. Older adults and individuals with disabilities suffer from the inability of counties to deliver on the promises made by the state to their residents. Once again, based upon the formula currently utilized to allocate EBS funding, Milwaukee County by population receives approximately 2.8x less funding than its rural counterparts. Once again, inequities based upon race, ethnicity and poverty are amplified by an inequitable fund distribution.

We are asking that the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors fully support this proposal to increase funding for these critical services statewide, as well as the proposed formula adjustment that will allow Milwaukee County's Aging and Disability Resource Centers to serve all of their residents with critical options counseling, home visits, and short-term services coordination. Moreover, additional funding and staff to perform these functions may actually drive down Medicaid expenditures by assisting more residents to defer Medicaid spend downs, nursing home placement, and even enrollment in Home and Community Based Long Term Care services.

Wisconsin pioneered the concept of coordinated access points for Long Term Services and Supports through publicly funded programs. It has been a model for other states to emulate because of our emphasis on consumer choice, coordinated access to services and streamlined eligibility determinations. Milwaukee County serves the largest population with highest percentage of socio-economic disadvantage and the largest number of long-term care participants in the state.

Additional funding to ADRCs will ensure access to services and supports to those who need it and rectify long-standing inequities in health, funding, and support for all of our residents, particularly in Milwaukee County. We look forward to Milwaukee County advancing these advocacy priorities during the 2021-22 Wisconsin State Budget process and recommend that Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors pass a resolution supporting the same.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors support the attached resolution seeking additional funding to the State ADRCs for the 2021-2023 state biennial budget to ensure access to critical services provided by ADRCs to older adults and people with disabilities.

### **Fiscal Impact**

A fiscal note form is attached.



Shakita LaGrant McClain, Director  
Department of Health and Human Services

cc: County Executive David Crowley  
Sup. Jason Haas, Chair, Finance Committee  
Chair, Health & Human Needs Committee  
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