

## Aging and Disability Resource Centers – State Budget Reinvestment TALKING POINTS

- The Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) across the state of Wisconsin served a critical role responding to residents hardest hit by the pandemic: older adults and people with disabilities. In the field with local health departments, ADRC staff across the state ensured residents' basic needs were being met, including nutrition, mental health resources, caregiver support, home and community-based support services, and transportation. ADRCs assisted residents to access Pandemic related Unemployment Assistance, explained Stimulus payments, prevented evictions, and reached out to tens of thousands of isolated seniors to prevent isolation and abuse and now, to connect them with COVID-19 vaccinations.
  - Yet, the reality is that too many people with disabilities had to wait needlessly for services. Too many older adults had no way to connect with the services they needed.
  - *Include a specific example of situations where the ADRC connected you or someone you know with resources during the pandemic here.*
- ADRC's are woefully short of the staff they need to serve their residents. ADRC's are meant to serve all of our seniors and Wisconsinites with disabilities – rich or poor, urban or rural, in crisis or not. Yet they can barely keep with the demand for the highest risk population in need of long-term care. Nowhere is this problem more acute than in Milwaukee County, where staffing levels were never sufficient and have actually declined over the past decade, while caseloads have increased.
- To illustrate this disparity, consider the ADRC's responsibility to provide options counseling, eligibility screening, and enrollment support for Wisconsin's publicly funded long-term care programs, such as FamilyCare. While Milwaukee County ADRC workers have enrolled more than 27% of the individuals in these statewide publicly funded long-term care programs, Milwaukee County's Aging and Disability Resource Centers only receives 13% of the statewide ADRC budget to serve this high need population. We are asking you to reverse this deficit in funding.
- The Wisconsin Department of Health Services has recognized this fact and last year recommended a **\$25.4 million increase to core ADRC funding** across the state, as well as a specific redistribution and reinvestment in Milwaukee County. We urge you to support this funding increase in the 2022-23 Wisconsin State Budget.
- If you have aging parents, are part of the sandwich generation, are a caregiver or know a caregiver, you know the pandemic has created a unique set of challenges. ADRCs provide critical support to our vulnerable residents and their families. Caregiving can be incredibly stressful. For older adults and people with disabilities to have the best quality of life, along with their families and loved ones, we need to ensure ADRCs are

able to fully respond to all of our residents. We support the Governor's initiatives to fund caregivers and the expansion of Dementia Care Specialists statewide. But neither of these initiatives will really help Milwaukee County, nor is there any additional funding for core ADRC services.

- High profile civic organizations, including the Wisconsin Counties Association, League of Wisconsin Municipalities, Aging and Disability Professionals Association of Wisconsin (ADPAW), Wisconsin Counties Human Services Association (WCHSA), the Wisconsin Human Services Fiscal Managers Association, Tribal Partners, and statewide Chambers of Commerce recognize the valuable role ADRCs play in our communities and the support they provide to our Wisconsin families, collectively they support an increase funding to ADRC's.
- We are asking you to listen to your constituents and help your grandparent, your parent, or your neighbor get access to the information, support, care, and resources they need to live healthy lives in our communities. The Wisconsin Legislature was one of the first to create Aging and Disability Resource Centers to do just that. Please reinvest in them today to make them work for all Wisconsinites.

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