

2019-21 State Budget Summary for Aging Advocates

The Governor's budget:

Health

- **Expands Medicaid** under the federal Affordable Care Act providing healthcare coverage to 82,000 low-income families and lowering state healthcare costs by \$320 million over the biennium (this benefits older adults who are not yet eligible for Medicare, as well as caregivers and direct care workers who struggle to afford health insurance and allows for the investment of over \$300 million into other Medicaid/health priorities).
- Increases **Navigator outreach** to help consumers navigate the federal marketplace.
- Creates a **Medicaid community health benefit** that invests \$45 million for nonmedical services to reduce and prevent health disparities that result from economic and social determinants of health. Services include but are not limited to housing referral services, stress management, nutritional counseling, and transportation services.
- Increases access to **dental services** in the state:
 - Creates a mid-level dental provider to address dental provider shortages in Wisconsin and provide \$1,500,000 over the biennium to educational institutions to fund the development of dental therapist training programs;
 - Provides \$18 million in fiscal year 2019-20 and \$20.5 million in fiscal year 2020-21 to provide Medicaid dental incentive payments through reimbursement rate increases to dental providers that serve Medicaid recipients and repeals the dental reimbursement pilot project;
 - Provides \$425,000 in fiscal year 2019-20 and \$850,000 in fiscal year 2020-21 to fund low-income dental clinics that provide dental services to Medicaid recipients and the uninsured;
 - Provides \$2 million in fiscal year 2019-20 and \$3 million in fiscal year 2020-21 to reimburse dental providers who serve Medicaid recipients with both physical and mental disabilities; and
 - Provides \$60,000 in each year of the biennium to increase funding for dental loan repayments for dentists who provide services in rural areas.
- Establishes **medical service delivery through telehealth under the Medicaid program**. Provide \$2.3 million in fiscal year 2019-20 and \$3.5 million in fiscal year 2020-21 to fund the increase of services due to increased access under the telehealth delivery model.
- Provides seniors with more information on health insurance options by re-estimating the costs of the Board on Aging and Long-Term Care's **Medigap Helpline** and providing \$3.6 million for the Board on Aging and Long-Term Care in FY 2020 and \$3.7 million in FY 2021.
- **Prescription Drug Programs/benefits:**
 - Fully funds the **SeniorCare** pharmacy benefit. Re-estimate the SeniorCare costs to reflect changes in caseload, cost, and utilization of prescription drugs;
 - Lowers costs of prescription drugs and generate savings by **establishing a program to import generic, off-brand drugs from abroad**;
 - Stops prescription price gouging and consumer exploitation by **creating transparency requirements for drug companies and pharmacy benefit managers**; and
 - Eliminates barriers for Medicaid/BadgerCare Plus recipients who are prescribed prescription drugs by **removing Medicaid prescription drug copayments**.

- Creates a \$250,000 GPR **grant to provide healthy aging programs in each year of the budget**. (*Note: The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network [WAAN] in collaboration with the Wisconsin State Alliance of YMCAs is requesting an **\$870,000 budget appropriation each year** for healthy aging grants to counties/tribes, YMCAs and other community-based organizations for proven programs and to support a statewide clearinghouse and support center.)

See WAAN's [Healthy Aging Grants - 2019](#) issue brief.

Caregiver Support

- Provides increased funding for caregivers by:
 - Provides \$14.8 million in each year to increase the direct care and services portion of the capitation rates the department provides to long-term care managed care organizations (Family Care MCOs) in recognition of the direct caregiver workforce challenges facing the state;
 - Provides \$3.3 million in fiscal year 2019-20 and \$13.4 million in fiscal year 2020-21 to fund rate increases for personal care direct care services (1.5% increase each year). This would increase the rate for personal care services provided on and after January 1, 2020, from the current rate of \$16.73 per hour to \$16.98 per hour, and increase the rate for personal care services provided on or after July 1, 2020, from \$16.98 per hour to \$17.24 per hour; and
 - Provides \$8.7 million in fiscal year 2019-20 and \$17.8 million in fiscal year 2020-21 for a 2.5 percent general rate increase for nursing homes with a 1.5 percent increase targeted to direct care workforce.

See WAAN's [Direct Care Workforce Support - 2019](#) issue brief.

- In recognition of the growing incidence of dementia in the state due to an aging population, provides \$2.8 million annually (\$5.6 million in the biennium) to expand the dementia care specialist (DCS) program to all aging and disability resource centers (ADRCs) in the state (adding 27 ADRC DCSs and 3 tribal DCSs).

See WAAN's [Family Caregiver Support - 2019](#) issue brief. See [DCS Fact Sheet - 2019](#)

- Provides 12.0 FTE positions in the Department of Health Services' Bureau of Assisted Living in the Division of Quality Assurance and 3.0 FTE ombudsman supervisor positions in the Board on Aging and Long-Term Care to address the increasing numbers of assisted living facilities and better serve consumers of Wisconsin long-term care programs.
- Expands the current state Family and Medical Leave Act by applying the law to employers with at least 25 employees; permitting leave to be taken to care for a grandparent, grandchild or sibling with serious health condition; and expanding the definition of "qualifying exigency."

Homestead Tax Credit

- Indexes the parameters of the homestead tax credit for inflation to preserve the credit's value
- Increases the maximum income threshold to \$30,000

Transportation

- Increases the specialized transportation assistance program for counties by \$3 million in each year of the biennium for senior and individuals with disabilities (nearly a 21% increase) and increases the Tribal Transportation for Elders program by 10% to help individuals stay independent and connected to their communities;
- Provides a 10 percent increase in General Transit Aids for a total of \$11 million annually; and
- Provides a 10 percent increase for paratransit aids beginning in FY20.

See WAAN's [Transportation-2019](#) issue brief.

Broadband

- Expands adequate broadband access to all Wisconsin residents by 2025.

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