

2021-23 Governor's Executive Budget Summary

What is in the Governor's budget that impacts older adults and caregivers?

The Governor's budget includes the following:

Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) - \$7 million over the biennium

- **Expand caregiver support services** to address the needs of caregivers of adults with disabilities who are age 19 to 59,
- **Expand the tribal aging and disability resource specialist program** which provides liaison services between the tribes and the aging and disability resource centers to ensure that tribal members receive culturally appropriate information and can comfortably and effectively access long-term care programs and services, and
- **Expand the tribal disability benefit specialist program**, which is a contractual partnership between the Wis. Department of Health Services (WI DHS) and the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council to provide assistance and advocacy services to adult tribal members with disabilities.

Broadband (High-Speed Internet) - Expands adequate broadband access to all Wisconsin residents by 2025:

- **Invest in the Broadband Expansion Grant program** at the Public Service Commission (\$76.8 mil/\$74.9 mil) to provide grants to profit or nonprofit organizations and/or municipalities **to help deliver broadband access to those parts of the state that are most in need of assistance.**
- **Modify statutory provisions that discourage municipalities from providing broadband service to residents in broadband "unserved" and "underserved" areas** and modify current law to allow these same municipalities to apply for grants under the broadband expansion grant program.
- **Create a new program at the WI Department of Children and Families (DCF) that is aimed at improving affordability of Internet access.** On behalf of families at or below 200% of the federal poverty level, DCF will work with community action agencies to reimburse the appropriate Internet service providers monthly (\$20 mil/\$20 mil.).
- **Establish a broadband line extension grant program** which will provide grants or financial assistance, with a \$4,000 maximum limit, to eligible households to subsidize the cost of a line extension from existing broadband infrastructure to a residence without access to 25/3 mbps service.
- **Modify current law to allow electric cooperatives and utilities to install, maintain or own broadband infrastructure on an eligible easement.**

- **Modify current law to protect broadband customers** by requiring broadband service providers to meet certain service requirements, including prohibiting a broadband service provider from denying service to residential customers based on race or income.

Dementia & Family Caregiver Support

- Increase the **Alzheimer’s Family and Caregiver Support Program (AFCSPP)** funding by \$1m over biennium (\$500,000/\$500,000) and increase the income limit from \$48,000 to \$55,000.
- Expand **Dementia Care Specialists** statewide by providing \$1.2 mil. in yr. 1/\$2.35 mil. in yr. 2
- **Create and funds a one-year pilot of the Tailored Care Assessment and Referral (TCARE) protocol** which is a care management protocol designed to support family members who are providing care to adults of any age with chronic or acute health conditions.
- **Require** hospitals to allow caregiver designation and to provide instruction for patient care after discharge (**Caregiver Advise, Record, Enable – [CARE] Act**).
- Require DHS to conduct a one-year pilot to **create a home care provider registry** and to issue a request for proposals to select the software platform.
- **Expand the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)** – the expansion requires smaller employers to provide FMLA to their workforce, extends leave to care for a grandparent, grandchild, or sibling (and others included in the current FMLA language) with a serious health condition and expands the definition of “serious health condition” to include medical quarantine (for the individual or a caregiver). Additionally, the expansion proposal lowers the threshold of hours an employee must work to qualify for FMLA.
- **Create a Caregiver Tax Credit** - an individual non-refundable income tax caregiver credit for qualified expenses up to \$500.
- **Establish mandatory initial training requirements for guardians** (Family and Guardian Training) and providing funding for the WI DHS to award a grant to an organization with expertise in state guardianship law to develop, administer and conduct the required guardian training in a plain language, web-based, on-line training module that can be accessed for free, with printed versions available for free upon request.

Dental Care

- **Create a new license for dental therapists** to increase the number of dental providers and dental services provided across the state, especially in regions designated as dental provider shortage areas.
- Increase access to dental services under the Medicaid program by **increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates for dental providers** who provide services to Medicaid and BadgerCare Plus patients.

Direct Care Workforce Proposals

- Provide funding to **increase the direct care and services portion of the Family Care capitation rates** provided to managed care (\$40.4 in yr. 1/\$37.4 mil. in yr. 2) in recognition of the direct care workforce challenges facing the state.
- Provide \$77.8 million over the biennium to **increase the rates paid to personal care workers**.

- Direct the WI DHS to develop a statewide minimum **rate band** that establishes equitable and sustainable rates **for home and community-based long-term care supports** (proposal to implement the rate bands to be included in the 2023-25 DHS budget).
- Direct WI DHS to develop and implement a pilot program to provide person-centered **direct support professional training** to achieve consistent standards of practices and direct DHS to develop a career ladder for caregivers leading to potential certification as a nurse aide.
- Allow direct support professionals to **disregard a portion of their income related to caregiving** without losing eligibility to the Wisconsin Shares childcare subsidy program through the WI Department of Children and Families.
- **Increase the nursing home and intermediate care facility rates for individuals with intellectual disabilities to reflect the increasing acuity of residents** by 11.5% in fiscal year 2021-22 and an additional 11.7% increase in fiscal year 2022-23. Of this rate increase, \$77.8 million over the biennium **will be invested in direct care staff in nursing homes.**
- **Increase expenditure authority to fund increasing costs associated with operating the Wisconsin Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls**
- **Provide four-year project positions to the Office of Caregiver Quality** to conduct entity background checks, screen misconduct reports and conduct field investigations into misconduct allegations in regulated healthcare settings and programs.

Housing

- **Create a new grant** (\$600,000 GPR annually) **to support the hiring of housing navigators throughout the state.**
- **Index the parameters of the Homestead Tax Credit** for inflation to preserve the credit's value (beginning in 2023) and increases the maximum income threshold to \$30,000.
- **Increase funding for homeless prevention programs.**
- To help address the need for more affordable housing - **increase the limit on the total amount of State Housing Tax Credits that may be authorized annually from \$42 million to \$100 million; and increase the credit period from six taxable years to ten taxable years.**
- **Modify statutory language related to landlord-tenant responsibilities** that were enacted over the past decade **to provide a better balance of rights and protections for landlords and tenants.**

Medicaid

- **Accept the federal ACA provision for Medicaid expansion** to provide coverage to approximately 90,000 state residents - covering all low- income Wisconsin residents who earn incomes between 0 and 138% of the federal poverty level (projected \$634 mil GPR savings over the biennium).
- **Repeal the BadgerCare reform changes** (work requirements, premium payments, health risk assessment, and copayments for nonemergency use of an emergency room) to create a uniform benefit system for all recipients and eliminate barriers for low-income individuals that receive Medicaid benefits.
- **Create a Medicaid community health benefit** that invests \$25 million for nonmedical services (housing referrals, nutritional mentoring, stress management, and other services that would positively impact an individual's economic and social condition) to reduce and prevent health disparities that result from economic and social determinants of health.

Mental Health

- **Support development of up to two regional crisis centers** with each offering a crisis urgent care and observation center, a crisis stabilization facility, and inpatient psychiatric beds.
- Establish **five regional crisis stabilization facilities** to assist adults in crisis or requiring short-term crisis stabilization.
- Establish **Emergency Response Collaboration Grants** to provide funding for grants to county/municipal governments to establish collaborative programs between behavioral health (BH) providers and local law enforcement to increase involvement of BH professionals in emergency response.
- **Provide funding** (\$1.2 million GPR in each year) **to support the staffing needs of county crisis programs and peer-run respite centers** for their telephone services that provide aid to individuals in crisis.
- Establish **Crisis Intervention Training Grant** to provide funding to conduct additional trainings on crisis intervention and de-escalation for law enforcement.
- Provide a **Milwaukee County Mobile Crisis Team** to support additional staffing and expand mobile crisis response availability.
- Provide funding for a real-time crisis stabilization, peer respite and inpatient psychiatric **bed tracking system** that is accessible to all entities involved in identifying placement for people in crisis.
- Establish a **Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind Behavioral Health Treatment Program** (\$1.9 mil.) offered by healthcare providers fluent in ASL and aware of Deaf culture.

Other - Aging and Disability Related Proposals

- Create a **Hearing Aid Assistance Pilot Program** and increase funding for the Telecommunications Assistance Program (TAP) to expand financial assistance for hearing aids (\$321,000/\$321,000)
- Provide funding to **increase the staffing of the WI Board on Aging and Long Term Care Ombudsman Program** to continue to provide quality service to the increasing caseload of persons age 60 and older who are consumers of Wisconsin long-term care programs (2 FTE).
- Re-estimate the costs of and **fully fund the Board on Aging and Long-Term Care's Medigap Helpline** that provides seniors with information on health insurance options.
- **Create a small business retirement savings program** for people who are not currently eligible for an employer-sponsored retirement plan.
- **Create a cabinet-level Chief Equity Officer and agency equity officers embedded within state department secretary's offices** to identify opportunities to advance equity in government operations and to determine how current government practices and policies impact communities of color and individuals with disabilities.
- **Create equity grants at the Department of Children and Families, Health Services, and Administration** for public, private, or nonprofit entities that promote diversity and advance equity and inclusion.
- **Create a new discretionary grant of equal amounts to the tribes** to support nongaming programs that **meet the needs of members of the tribes**. The grant will start in fiscal year 2022-23 and will be funded at \$11 million or \$1 million per federally recognized tribe.
- **Provide grant funding for local and tribal public health departments to implement health equity action plans and to support communicable disease control and prevention activities.**

- **Increase (by 5%) grants to counties and the governing bodies of federally recognized American Indian tribes and bands in support of the costs of maintaining veterans service offices.**
- **Provide funding (\$425,000 GPR in each year) to implement a Healthy Eating Incentives Pilot Program** that will provide up to 2,000 FoodShare households with discounts on fresh produce and other healthy food options.

Prescription Drug Costs

- Re-estimate the costs of and **fully fund the SeniorCare program** to reflect changes in caseload, cost, and utilization of prescription drugs. In 2020, 95,045 individuals participated in the program and participation is expected to increase over the biennium.
- Lower the cost of prescription drugs and generate savings by **establishing a Prescription Drug Importation Program to import generic, off-brand drugs from abroad.**
- **Create transparency requirements for drug companies and pharmacy benefit managers to stop prescription price gouging and consumer exploitation.**
- Eliminate barriers for Medicaid/BadgerCare Plus recipients who are prescribed prescription drugs by **removing Medicaid prescription drug copayments.**
- **Create a Prescription Drug Affordability Review Board** to establish prescription drug spending targets for public sector entities and establishing price limits.
- **Establish a \$50 copay cap on insulin and create an Insulin Safety Net Program** to ensure people do not need to choose between rationing insulin and meeting other basic needs.
- **Increase funding for free and charitable clinics** (\$4 million over the biennium).
- **Create a Patient Pharmacy Benefit Tool** to help prescribers take out-of-pocket costs into consideration when choosing between medically similar medication options.

Transportation

- **Create a Transit Capital Improvement Grant Program** - \$10 million in each year of the biennium.
- **Increase general transit operating assistance** by 2.5% in each year of the biennium.
- **Increase funding for the employment access and mobility programs (WETAP)**- \$4 million in each year of the biennium.
- **Increase paratransit aids** by 2.5% in each year of the biennium.
- **Increase funding in the capital assistance program for specialized transportation (s.85.22)** in each year of the biennium - \$22,900 yr. 1/ \$46,300 yr. 2.
- **Change the fund source for tribal elderly transportation grants (s.85.215)** from tribal gaming revenue to the transportation fund **and increase funding for the program** -\$21,800 yr. 1/\$44,700 yr. 2.
- **Reinstate powers to local communities** for nonmotorized travel **by including provisions for complete streets and the ability to use eminent domain for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure** to assist local municipalities to support all modes of transportation infrastructure. Provide **\$75 million for local multimodal transportation projects** that combine elements and jurisdictions that make funding from existing programs difficult.
- **Allow local government to collaborate to create and fund cross-jurisdiction transit corridors.**
- **Open two new customer service centers for the Division of Motor Vehicles in Dane and Brown counties.**

Voting/Elections

- **Automatic Voter Registration** – Directs the WI Elections Commission to work with the Department of Transportation to begin automatic voter registration and to facilitate the initial registration of all eligible electors as soon as practicable.
- **Expand voting access by eliminating the restriction on how soon a person may complete an absentee ballot in person** and further recommending that a person may complete an absentee ballot in person no later than 7:00 p.m. on the Friday preceding the election.
- **Require polling places to post a voter bill of rights** which informs voters of voting rights guaranteed under current law.

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