



Date: April 23, 2025

To: Chairwoman Cabral-Guevara and Members of the Senate Committee on Health

From: Janet Zander, Advocacy & Public Policy Coordinator

Re: Support for SB 152 – Financial eligibility for the Alzheimer’s Family and Caregiver Support Program (AFCSP)

Thank you for this opportunity to share testimony on SB 152. The Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc. (GWAAR) is a nonprofit agency committed to supporting the successful delivery of aging programs and services in our service area consisting of 70 counties (all but Dane and Milwaukee) and 11 tribes in Wisconsin. We are one of three area agencies on aging (AAAs) in Wisconsin. Our mission is to deliver innovative support to lead aging agencies, as we work together to **promote, protect, and enhance the well-being of older people in Wisconsin.**

We are grateful to the state legislature for their ongoing support and funding of this essential program. Since 1985, the Wisconsin AFCSP has been a vital resource for families caring for loved ones with dementia, at home. AFCSP provides essential services like respite, transportation, and in-home support, which delay more costly Medicaid funded care. On average family caregivers spend an average of \$7,200/year to help meet the care needs of a loved one. For family caregivers of individuals with dementia these out-of-pocket expenses rise to an average of over \$12,000/year to pay for direct services and support, not including the financial challenges they face related to lost wages and other indirect costs. Dementia caregivers also report higher levels of stress, burden, and depressive symptoms compared to those caring for individuals without dementia.

Recent changes to the federal caregiver support program under the Older Americans Act (OAA) are making it difficult for counties and tribes to fully utilize state and federal caregiver support funding. Starting in 2025, the 25% match requirement for the federal caregiver support program can no longer be met using funds from a means-tested (income-based eligibility) program like AFCSP. More than half of Wisconsin counties were using AFCSP to meet the federal match requirement and now face losing their share of the \$3.5 million in annual federal caregiver support. Additionally, AFCSP income restrictions (household income eligibility capped at \$48,000/year) prevent some counties and tribes from fully utilizing their AFCSP funding, leaving some low- to middle-income families without the support they need.

GWAAR supports SB 152, as this legislation calling for an amendment of the state statute to eliminate the income restrictions for AFCSP will safeguard essential federal dollars for Wisconsin families, maximize state caregiver support, continue vital resources to support continued care at home and reduce healthcare cost, and further strengthen support for family caregivers across the state. We respectfully request this committee to advance this legislation and further strengthen the support available to Wisconsin family caregivers.

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We appreciate the interest in and efforts of policy makers to protect crucial family caregiver resources and look forward to continuing to work with you on policies that improve the quality of life of older people in Wisconsin.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and recommendations related to SB 152.

Sincerely,

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