

ACTION ALERT: 2025-27 State Budget

Week Four

4-28-25

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The state legislature's Joint Finance Committee (JFC) has two remaining public hearings on the 2025-2027 State Budget. The remaining public hearing schedule is:

- April 28 - Hayward High School Auditorium - 10320 Greenwood Lane Hayward, WI 54843; 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. - **TODAY**
- April 29 – Northcentral Technical College - Center for Health Sciences 1000 West Campus Drive Wausau, WI 54401 Wausau, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. – **TOMORROW**

See [Tips for Testifying Before JFC at State Budget Hearings](#). See the Joint Finance Committee 2025-27 Biennial Budget [Public Comment Website](#) for additional information, including the link to submit written budget testimony via the JFC's online portal.

With so much at stake for older adults, people living with disabilities, and caregivers in this budget, we must use every opportunity available to provide input on the 2025-27 state budget. **This is the fourth and final week of the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network's (WAAN) four-week state budget campaign. The campaign includes strategies for connecting with JFC members, your own state Senator and Assembly Representative, as well as opportunities to educate the public and media about WAAN's budget priority issues and their impact on your life and/or the lives of those you care for and about.**

Your stories are important and impactful!

To help coordinate our messages, WAAN created a **theme for each week of the campaign**. The themes each week cover issues of importance to older people and family caregivers.

The theme for this fourth and final week is:

- **April 28th Knowledge is Power:** This week our focus will be on funding for Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs), the Elder Benefit Specialist Program, and the Wisconsin Guardianship Support Center

Week Four (4/28 – 5/02/25) - Bullet/Talking Points for this week's "Knowledge is Power" theme -

Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) Investment

- Wisconsin's statewide network of ADRCs provide information about critical, cost-saving services and programs related to aging or living with a disability. They serve individuals, family members, friends and professionals working with related issues.
- Investing in ADRCs yields a remarkable return on investment. In 2023, for every dollar invested in ADRC services, taxpayers saved \$3.88, demonstrating a total return on investment of 388%. Increasing funding to ADRCs will deliver substantial benefits to constituents and taxpayers.
- A person interacts with an ADRC in Wisconsin every 60 seconds. In 2023, ADRCs facilitated over 536,627 contacts with individuals, families, and professionals seeking guidance and support. Despite this significant reach, current funding levels are inadequate to sustain operations and meet the rising demand for services.

Budget ask: Increase funding for Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) by \$19.9 million in the 2025-2027 biennial state budget to continue to address funding inequities between ADRCs and begin to address increasing serving needs resulting from a growing aging population.

For more information, see WAAN's [ADRC Issue Brief](#).

Elder Benefit Specialist Program

- EBSs provide benefit counseling and assistance with appeals in the areas of Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, FoodShare, housing, consumer debt, and other health insurance coverage issues.
- Despite significant population growth, increasing demand for EBS services, and increasing complexities associated with access to essential benefit programs, the EBS program has not seen an increase in state funding in nearly three decades (the last funding increase was in 1997).
- Budget shortfalls result in EBSs having to reduce outreach and one-on-one counseling and lengthy delays for customers waiting for appointments (many of which are very time sensitive) which can lead to poorer outcomes for consumers.
- Federal law was modified to clarify that Older Americans Act Title III-B funding, previously used for both legal representation of EBS clients and local EBS support, can only be used for legal representation, leaving a need for nearly \$400,000 to fund the essential training and support of local EBS.

Budget ask: Increase state funding for the Elder Benefit Specialist (EBS) program by \$2.7 million in each year of the budget (\$ 46.81(5)) to account for the significant increase in the population served by local programs, increasing demand for services, and increasing complexities associated with access to essential benefit programs, and maintaining EBS program support (training and supervision).

For more information, see WAAN's Elder Benefit Specialist Issue Brief (update pending).

Wisconsin Guardianship Support Center

- Wisconsin's Guardianship Support Center (GSC) is a statewide resource providing information, support, counseling, interpretation of related laws, technical assistance and education for consumers, guardians and other substitute decision-makers, family members and professionals who work with individuals on guardianships, advance directives, emergency detention, protective services/placement and on identification and responding to reports of abuse, neglect and financial exploitation.
- The work of the GSC is delivered in four essential services - Toll-Free Helpline, Outreach, Publications, and Guardianship Process Improvement. Over the past three years, contacts to the GSC increased by 17% to nearly 3,000 contacts in 2023; additionally, GSC website traffic has increased by 20% during this time (over 18,000 page views in 2023).

Core member organizations

Aging and Disability Professionals Association of Wisconsin (ADPAW) • Alzheimer's Association Wisconsin Chapter Board on Aging and Long Term Care (BOALTC) • Wisconsin Adult Day Services Association (WADSA) Wisconsin Association of Area Agencies on Aging (W4A) • Wisconsin Association of Benefit Specialists (WABS) Wisconsin Association of Nutrition Directors (WAND) • Wisconsin Association of Senior Centers (WASC) Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance (WFACSA) • Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (WIHA) Wisconsin Senior Advocates • Wisconsin Senior Corps Association (WISCA) • Wisconsin Tribal Aging Unit Association

Mission

The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) works with and for all older adults by educating community members and policy makers on priority issues while advocating for meaningful change. Learn more at <https://gwaar.org/waan>.

- Funding for the GSC has been static at \$100,000/year for nearly 20 years and no longer covers the expenses of operating the program. In recent years, the volume and complexity of contacts (calls and emails) to the GSC continue to exceed the capacity of its one full-time attorney, despite administrative support (provided by an intern) to assist with helpline intakes, data entry, and resource publications.

Budget ask: Increase Guardianship Support Center funding by \$100,000/year (\$ 46.977(1)) to meet increased demand for training and technical assistance for consumers, families, and professionals statewide and to hire additional legal and support staff to improve response times to calls and emails, resume outreach activities in key communities, and meet operational expenses, including updating and translation of current resources.

For more information, see WAAN's [GSC Issue Brief](#).

Actions needed this week:

Action Step 1 – Submit online comments to Joint Finance Committee (JFC) members related to one or all of the issues of the week (see talking points and issue brief links above. **Include how these issues or services (or lack of services) impact your life or the life of someone you care about.** Use JFC's online portal: www.legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments (If you prefer, your comments may also be submitted to the Joint Finance Committee using the following email address: budget.comments@legis.wisconsin.gov).

Action Step 2 – Send emails to your own state elected officials. Send one email to your state Assembly Representative and another to your state Senator. To find out who your state legislators are, and to find their contact information, go to <https://maps.legis.wisconsin.gov/> and enter your home address at the top of the page. **Let your legislators know how these issues impact you personally or those you serve. Be sure you include your address, so they know you are a constituent or are serving constituents in their district.** Every member of the Assembly and Senate will eventually vote on the budget. In addition, they can bring your concerns to members of the JFC since they all have a “budget buddy” to make sure they each have a say in the budget.

Action Step 3 – Share this message with board/advisory council members, program participants, volunteers, community members and partners, and family and friends; ask them to take action too!

Optional Action Steps

Share your story (see [Five Steps for Creating Powerful Personal Testimony](#)). How do the programs or services in this week's theme or the absence of these services and programs affect your life or the life of a family member, friend, or someone you serve. **In addition to sharing your personal story in your written comments to JFC and your own state legislators, consider one or more of these additional actions:**

- Write a letter to the editor!** Using your story and/or talking points on this week's issues (see above) write a short letter to the editor to your local daily or weekly paper.

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- B. Prepare articles for your agency newsletter related to these budget topics** (and/or submit an article to your local newspaper regarding this week's issues).
- C. Attend an in-district listening session with your legislator(s).** Many legislators are holding listening sessions in their districts. Sign up for your legislators' electronic newsletters and watch for opportunities for you to connect with them.
- D. Invite your legislators for a site visit or to attend an agency event or board meeting.** This is a great way to help your legislators hear about and see the great work you are doing.

Your voice matters! The more of us that participate in the hearings and the weekly campaign activities, the more legislators will hear about the issues important to aging advocates and older adults.

All WAAN issue briefs are available at: <https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2008488>.

Previously issued WAAN 2025-27 State Budget Action Alerts are available at:

- **Week One** - <https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2008518>
- **Week Two** - <https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2008529>
- **Week Three** - <https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2008536>

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