Statewide Caregiver Coordinators Meeting
Advocacy Update
9-23-25

State

- **SB 152 (financial eligibility for AFCSP) Signed into Law**

SB 152/AB 176:

- **Protects Federal Funding**: Secures federal NFCSP dollars vital for caregivers.
- **Supports Care at Home**: Makes resources like adult day care and home modifications available.
- **Reduces Healthcare Costs**: Allows individuals to remain at home longer.
- **Strengthens Family Support**: Ensures no family is left behind.

The federal Older Americans Act family caregiver support program requires a 25% match. Over 50% of Wisconsin counties use the state's AFCSP program to meet the federal match requirement. Federal rules now prohibit the use of income-based eligibility programs, such as the current AFCSP, from being used as match and putting Wisconsin counties out of compliance with federal rules. Without this change to remove the AFCSP income-based eligibility requirements, federal funds essential to caregiver programs across the state are at risk.

On Fri., Aug. 8, Governor Evers signed SB 152 into law (2025 Wisconsin Act 21). This legislation removes income requirements for the Alzheimer's Family and Caregiver Support Program (AFCSP) to align with the federal National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP). Removing income-based eligibility requirements from AFCSP will protect up to $3.5 million in annual federal NFCSP funding and ensure support remains accessible to low- and middle-income families. This legislation received strong bipartisan support from the state legislature, with one-third of state legislators signed on in support of this bipartisan legislation. SB 152 does not specifically include an effective date; therefore, the bill takes effect within a few days after it is signed (giving the Legislative Reference Bureau time to post the new bill language). Unless specified differently in the bill (which SB 152 does not), the day after the governor signs a bill, the Legislative Reference Bureau publishes the new act online. The law takes effect the day after.

Caregiver Designation – Sen. Quinn & Rep. Green – drafting

This legislation would provide an opportunity for caregivers, when applying for or renewing a driver's license or applying for a state I.D., to provide the names and contact info for up to three individuals for whom the applicant is the primary caregiver. Should the need arise, the DMV could disclose the information provided to a law enforcement agency. Pushing for the addition of names/contacts of people/agencies willing to provide temporary care if the caregiver is unable to. Stay tuned for updates on introduction of the bill.

Memory Care Designation – Sen. Quinn drafting

This legislation would create a clear definition of "memory care" and set specific criteria for facilities who wish to use a "memory care" designation. The bill would also establish enhanced dementia-specific training (initial and ongoing continuing education). The purpose of this legislation is to help prevent misleading advertising and ensure high-quality, person-centered care for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Stay tuned for updates on introduction of the bill.

Volunteer Driver Protection – seeking legislative sponsors

This legislation would modify state law to protect volunteer drivers from insurance companies classifying volunteer driving as commercial activity (like livery services – taxis and TNCs). Wisconsin communities are feeling the effects of insurance practices that penalize volunteer drivers (nonrenewal, high-cost premium increases). A statewide survey of volunteer driver programs revealed 34% of volunteer driver programs lost volunteer drivers due to increased insurance premiums or denials of coverage. This bill would amend Wisconsin's insurance statutes to prevent insurance companies from increasing premiums or denying coverage *solely due to volunteer driving*. Transportation can function as respite care by allowing a primary caregiver a break while a trained staff member or volunteer to transport the care recipient to a day program, social event, medical service or other activities, providing both peace of mind for the caregiver and enjoyable experiences for the people receiving care.

- **Speaker's Task Force on Elder Services**

Earlier this month, four new Speaker's Task Forces were announced, including the Speaker's Task Force on Elder Services. Representative **Pat Snyder** (Assembly Dist. #85) was appointed as the chair of this new task force. The remaining task force membership is not yet known but is expected to be announced in the coming weeks. In a meeting with Rep. Snyder last week, he indicated palliative care, aging at home, elder abuse and financial security for older adults, social isolation, and transportation were some of the issues the task force might consider, though he is interested in hearing what other task forces members might also wish to prioritize. Rep. Snyder said the plan is to hold several public hearings around the state in Oct. and Nov., with a goal of having bill drafts in Jan. 2026. More information will be shared when the additional task force members are announced. Watch for additional information regarding the dates and locations of public hearings. It will be important for the task force to hear from older adults and aging network professionals around the state regarding the challenges older people face as they plan to stay living in their homes.

Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) - Aging Advocacy Events 2026

For 2026, in lieu of hosting Aging Advocacy Day in May at the State Capitol, WAAN will be working with its core members to host a series of in-district events, virtual sessions to prepare constituents for legislative visits and discussions on priority aging issues, and a call-in/email campaign targeting state legislators.

Historically, WAAN held an in-person advocacy day each year in May (Older Americans Month), in Madison. In odd-numbered years, the state legislature is actively working on legislation, including the biennial state budget, so this is a great time to bring advocates into the State Capitol to meet with their legislators and staff. In even-numbered years, by May, the state legislature is focused on committee work and legislators are spending the bulk of their time back home in their district. In 2026, the legislature's last general session Floorperiod is scheduled for March 17-19.

To expand on our efforts to build and strengthen relationships between constituents and their elected officials, WAAN's focus will be on in-district meetings for 2026 to provide opportunities for citizens to connect with their state legislators in their local communities. In celebration of Older Americans Month, an online advocacy campaign connecting advocates with their state legislators will also be scheduled in May.

In-district meetings with state and/or federal legislators are a great way to build and strengthen relationships between constituents and their elected officials. These meetings, site visits, tours, and listening sessions provide opportunities for citizens to connect with their state legislators in their own local communities. The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) has agreed to offer training, collect and create templates, and provide other resources to support in-district meeting hosts.

To date, La Crosse and Brown Counties have graciously shared some of their resources to serve as examples/samples for others to use as templates for creating their own in-district materials. **WAAN encourages others to share their resources too!** A broad variety of materials will help others to find materials that can be personalized to best fit their community needs.

To view the existing resources, go to**: https://gwaar.org/advocacy-toolkit** - In-District Meeting Resources.

To share materials your agency/group has created, please email them to Janet Zander, Advocacy & Public Policy Coordinator, GWAAR at **janet.zander@gwaar.org,** along with your permission for us to post the resources to the Toolkit. If you are looking for a particular resource and can't find it, please email me and let me know what would be helpful to you. Together, we can create a robust collection of in-district meeting resources. Thank you.

Federal

- **FY 2026 Budget: Continuing Resolution or Government Shutdown**

Last Friday, the House voted 217-212 to advance a short-term continuing resolution (CR) funding the federal government through Nov. 21, 2025. House members are now in recess (and in their home states) through Oct. 1 (after FY 2025 funding is expected to retire – Sept. 30). The CR mostly kept funding at the same levels as the previous fiscal year**.** Later Fri., following the House vote, the Senate attempted and failed to advance both the House passed CR and an alternative funding measure put forth be the Democrats (60 votes are needed to pass the CR). Senate members are also now in recess and scheduled to return on Mon., Sept. 29 (one day before funding expires). When the Senate returns, they are expected to continue tackling the funding measure. The lack of a clear path forward increases the likelihood of a partial government shutdown on Oct. 1. The measure passed in the added $88 million in security funding for lawmakers and members of the Supreme Court and executive branch. Democrats in the Senate are refraining from supporting the Senate bill offered in hopes of gaining support for their proposal which would extend enhanced subsidies in the Health Insurance Marketplace which are set to expire at the end of the year, and reverse Medicaid cuts that were included in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act enacted earlier this year.

During a shutdown, agencies cease all "non-essential" activities, many government services are suspended, and federal employees are either furloughed or required to work without pay. The extent of service disruption depends on the length of the shutdown and which agencies are unfunded. Programs like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid continue because they are authorized by permanent law rather than annual appropriations. However, customer service wait times may increase and some administrative functions could be delayed.

Lifespan Respite Act Reauthorization

The Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act of 2025 was introduced in Congress to reauthorize the existing Lifespan Respite Care Program and ensure its continued funding for family caregivers. The bill expands eligibility by defining a caregiver as any "unpaid individual" and extends the funding authorization to fiscal years 2025-2030, providing continued federal support for respite services that help prevent caregiver burnout and improve the well-being of both caregivers and those they care for. S. 830 (co-sponsored by Sen. Tammy Baldwin) and H.R. 2560 were introduced this past spring (2025), but have not made much progress since introduction. The last reauthorization expired nearly one year ago.

Older Americans Act Reauthorization

In June 2025, Senators Bill Cassidy (R-LA) and Bernie Sanders (I-VT) introduced the Older Americans Act (OAA) Reauthorization Act of 2025 (S. 2120), a bill aiming to reauthorize the Older Americans Act (OAA) for four more years. The OAA, the main federal law supporting programs for adults 60 and over, needs regular reauthorization to adapt to the needs of an aging population. Key provisions in this bipartisan bill include strengthening the **Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program** by creating a full-time National Director position and authorizing studies on program effectiveness, and improving the **National Family Caregiver Support Program** to reduce barriers and include trauma-informed services. It also proposes establishing a clearinghouse for best practices and increasing funding authorization. The current proposal extends authorization through 2029 and provides an 18% increase in funding authorization over four years. No Wis. Members of Congress are signed on and no House companion bill has yet been introduced. Like the Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act, the last OAA reauthorization expired on 9/30/24.