



Date: Oct. 22, 2025

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

From: Janet Zander, Advocacy & Public Policy Coordinator

Re: Support for SB 410 – Grants for Falls Prevention Awareness and Initiatives

Thank you for this opportunity to share testimony on SB 410. My name is Janet Zander, and I serve as the Advocacy and Public Policy Coordinator for the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc. (GWAAR). I also provide policy and advocacy support to the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN).

**Most falls are preventable**, yet most of us know someone who has experienced a fall, or we ourselves have fallen. Nationally, more than one in four adults age 65 and older experience a fall each year. Falls are a leading cause of injury and death in Wisconsin and, regrettably, our state has the highest rate of fall related deaths in the nation. **The good news is, we know how to reduce falls in Wisconsin.** The Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (WIHA) helps us to find the information and resources we need to make changes to keep us safe. To ensure evidence-based community programs like Stepping On, which are proven to reduce falls by 31%, are regularly available in every community, **we need your support.** These programs equip older people with practical tools to reduce fall risk, manage chronic conditions, and maintain physical activity. In turn, the need for emergency medical responses and hospitalizations is significantly reduced.

**GWAAR and WAAN support SB 410** which directs the state Department of Health Services to award a grant in the amount of \$450,000 in both fiscal years 2025-26 and 2026-27 to the Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging for the purpose of statewide falls prevention awareness and initiatives and appropriates \$450,000 in both fiscal years for that purpose.

Falls are a key driver of emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and nursing home admissions. Falls (which most often happen inside the home) also represent an increasing percentage of 911 calls across the state, resulting in increased pressure on local emergency medical services and emergency department capacity. Many people lack access to the community or health care resources needed to prevent falls.

A state investment in falls prevention awareness and initiatives will reduce falls in older adults and associated injury related costs, manage chronic conditions, and increase physical activity to reduce costs, improve wellness, and reduce the burden on public safety.

We appreciate the interest in and efforts of policy makers to **improve the health and well-being of Wisconsinites as we age.** We look forward to continuing to work with you on policies that improve the

quality of life for older people in Wisconsin. Thank you for your consideration of these comments related to SB 410.

*The Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc. (GWAAR - <https://gwaar.org/>) 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. GWAAR is one of three Area Agencies on Aging in Wisconsin. GWAAR provides lead aging agencies in our service area with training, technical assistance, and advocacy to ensure the availability and quality of programs and services to meet the changing needs of older people in Wisconsin. GWAAR is also a member of the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN - <https://gwaar.org/wisconsin-aging-advocacy-network>) a collaboration of organizations and individuals working with and for Wisconsin's older adults to shape policy solutions that ensure we can all thrive as we age.*

Contact:

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