

**Statewide Caregiver Support Meeting  
Advocacy Update  
November 25, 2025**

**State**

- **SB 578/AB 598 – Patient’s Representative Legislation (Next of Kin)**

Wisconsin state legislators introduced legislation (**SB 578/AB 598**) that creates “Patient Representatives” who would be given the authority to consent to patient admissions to nursing homes *without requiring a petition for guardianship or protective placement*. This legislation is similar to [Assembly Bill 1088](#) which was introduced last session; opposed by GWAAR and other aging, disability, and legal advocates; and failed to pass in the Senate before the session ended.

On Nov. 11, 2025, the Senate Health Committee voted (4-1) to pass **SB 578**. The bill is now available for scheduling a vote by the full Senate. The [Assembly Health, Aging and Long-Term Care Committee](#) held a public hearing on **AB 598** on Wed., Nov. 12, 2025. The Assembly committee has not yet scheduled a vote on this legislation.

**GWAAR and other aging, disability, and legal advocates oppose this legislation**, as we believe this legislation creates risk for patients and family members, has legal and operational issues, and does not resolve the issue it was designed to address - quick transition of hospitalized patients who have become incapacitated to make health care decisions, are medically ready to be discharged, and do not have a Power of Attorney for Health Care (POAHC). Additionally, this legislation is more expansive than “Next of Kin” laws existing in other states. **No other states allow next of kin financial decision-making powers.**

**Take Action:**

**Please reach out to your State Senator and Assembly Representative** to share your thoughts regarding this legislation that is moving quickly. For more information, see WAAN’s [Action Alert](#) and a grid [Comparison of Wisconsin Power of Attorney for Health Care and Patient Representative Proposal](#) (created by Polly Schumaker, GWAAR’s Guardianship Support Center attorney).

**Speaker’s Task Force on Elder Services – Upcoming Dates**

Last week, the State [Assembly Speaker's Task Force on Elder Services](#) held their second and third informational hearings. Members of the Task Force heard about:

- A community center located within a YMCA that offered health promotion classes, access to exercise machines, social activities and more,

- A three-year pilot community paramedicine program to improve access to primary care by addressing barriers to care. So far, the program has demonstrated a significant reduction in ambulance calls and emergency room visits,
- Evidence-based falls prevention initiatives and other health promotion classes,
- ADRC and aging unit programs/services and funding needs,
- Scams and financial exploitation,
- A joint county/city program to address homelessness,
- Adult Protective Services growing caseloads and funding needs,
- Advance Care Planning clinics,
- Challenges related to quick enrollment of hospitalized patients into Family Care, and
- Strategies to support long-term care and residential services.

The task force is planning to hold one more informational hearing in Madison sometime in early Jan. 2026 (the date has not yet been determined).

As a reminder, the Task Force is looking to identify ways to improve the quality of life for older Wisconsinites and is focused on programs, services, and policies that help older people maintain independence in their own homes, encourage social interaction and community engagement to combat isolation and loneliness, prioritize physical wellbeing and financial independence, and prevent elder financial exploitation.

To ensure task force members hear from all those wishing to share information related to successful programs and services to help older Wisconsinites remain living at home or the challenges faced by older people planning to age in place, **please watch for an action alert to help connect aging network professionals, older people, and family caregivers with members of the Task Force.** In the meantime, you are encouraged to contact members of the Task Force directly. You will find contact information for each of the members at the links below.

- [Representative Snyder \(Chair\)](#)
- [Representative Doyle \(Vice-Chair\)](#)
- [Representative Melotik](#)
- [Representative Gundrum](#)
- [Representative VanderMeer](#)
- [Representative Novak](#)
- [Representative McCarville](#)
- [Representative Taylor](#)

- **Volunteer Driver Program/Volunteer Driver Stories Still Needed**

GWAAR and the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) are collaborating with legislators to create **legislation to protect volunteer drivers from denial of insurance coverage or higher insurance**

**premiums, solely because they are volunteer drivers. Interest in this issue has been expressed by Sen. James (R-Thorp) who serves Senate Dist. 23.** His office has drafted legislation to protect volunteer drivers, and we are urging him to put the bill out for co-sponsorship soon. **Interest has also been expressed by Rep. Snyder (R-Weston) serving Assembly Dist. 85 and chair of the new Speaker's Task Force on Elder Services.** One of the ways we can demonstrate strong support for volunteer driver programs and drivers is through constituent stories! **We are grateful to the few people who submitted stories and need more.**

**Please help us distribute the story collection survey link highlighted below and encourage more people to participate.** Stories are needed from **volunteer program administrators, volunteer drivers, volunteer driver program passengers, individuals with unmet transportation needs, and caregivers of people who use volunteer driver programs or need transportation services.** These stories can help on many levels:

- Providing policymakers with real-life examples of challenges or benefits
- Showing where gaps exist in our current policies
- Demonstrating current and emerging issues
- Conveying the impact of a specific policy/policies

Specific information collected will remain private if individuals wish. If survey respondents are willing to share their story or let us share your story, they can complete the contact information section to provide us with a way to connect with them. Anyone with questions or who would like to speak to someone about their story can contact either:

- Janet Zander, Advocacy & Public Policy Coordinator at 608-228-7253 or [janet.zander@gwaar.org](mailto:janet.zander@gwaar.org)
- Nick Musson, Transportation & Aging Plan Specialist at 608-228-8092 or [nick.musson@gwaar.org](mailto:nick.musson@gwaar.org)

For more information regarding the volunteer driver insurance issue, see WAAN's [State Issue Brief](#).

**Thank you for completing the survey and/or sharing our story collection survey link:**

<https://forms.office.com/r/ECJWtVa1TX>

### **FoodShare Update**

Back in October, over 100 local, regional, and statewide organizations sent a letter to the Wisconsin State Legislature asking them to fully and immediately support the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' (DHS) funding request of \$69 million which is needed to implement FoodShare program changes

required by the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA). The funding is needed in this biennium (2025-2027) and was not included in the state budget signed into law this past July.

The letter to the legislature requested the funding be included as part of AB 387/SB 390, the "budget correction" bill introduced this session. Unfortunately, the State Legislature did not provide the funding needed to implement the required changes to the FoodShare program. Without additional funding, needed staff cannot be hired and trained and the state is put at an greater risk of increasing its error rate, which will result in financial penalties for the state.

It is critical for this funding to be provided soon; over 43,000 people are at risk of losing basic food necessities if they don't get the help they need to meet work requirements.

If the FoodShare program is important to you and/or those you care about, please contact your State Senator and Assembly Representative to share your thoughts on the importance of the program to older adults, people living with disabilities and/or caregivers. To find contact information for your state legislators enter your home address in the text box here: [Find Your Legislator](#).

- **Federal Government Shutdown Ends & FoodShare**

On Wed., November 12, the longest federal government shutdown in U.S. history (43 days) ended when Congress passed a spending package which the President then signed into law. **The spending package included a Continuing Resolution (CR) which funds portions of the federal government (like Older Americans Act [OAA] programs and the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Provider Acts [MIPPA]) through January 30, 2026**, but does not address the expiring Affordable Care Act (ACA) enhanced subsidies. The spending package also included three appropriations bills which will fund several key operations for the remainder of the federal fiscal year (Sept. 30, 2026), including full funding for SNAP (FoodShare in Wisconsin).

With federal funding for SNAP now secured, **the Wisconsin Department of Health Services does not anticipate any further disruptions of FoodShare for the remainder of the federal fiscal year**. FoodShare members will get their December benefits on schedule. Members may continue to use benefits on their QUEST cards. FoodShare members can check their FoodShare balance by calling QUEST Card Services at 877-415-5164.

The CR provides a temporary solution for the remaining nine appropriations bills that still need to be passed, including the bill for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) which includes OAA and other aging services funding. **Advocacy is still needed to ensure OAA programs are protected in a future CR or in a final spending bill**. Stay tuned for updated advocacy materials from our federal partners in the coming weeks.