



Date: February 4, 2026

To: Chair Moses and members of the Assembly Committee on Health, Aging and Long-Term Care

From: Janet Zander, Advocacy & Public Policy Coordinator

Re: Support for AB 970 re: Grants for Community EMS and Grants for Falls Prevention and Awareness Initiatives

Thank you for this opportunity to share testimony in support of AB 970. My name is Janet Zander. 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).

Assembly Bill 970

The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) and the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR) are dedicated to advancing policies that help older adults live safely and independently in their own homes. We are writing to express our strong support for Assembly Bill 970, a critical initiative stemming from the Speaker's Task Force on Elder Services. AB 970 is a vital step toward that goal by investing in two key areas:

Expanding Proactive Care Through Community Paramedicine –

Assembly Bill 970 provides **a one-time grant of \$600,000 to support the creation of six community paramedicine programs**. Thanks to the work of the Speaker's Task Force on Elder Services, GWAAR learned of the exciting work taking place in a few, fortunate Wisconsin communities where community paramedics are improving access to primary care. Community paramedicine programs offer preventive services, chronic disease management, health screening, and mental health support, often connecting patients with needed community resources and services. Utilizing EMS personnel, these programs provide proactive, in-home care for underserved or high-system-utilizing populations. By offering to help community members stay living in their own homes, community paramedics and EMS practitioners earn the trust of community members and help them tackle whatever they may be struggling with (e.g. paying for prescriptions, need home adaptations, **frequent falls**, uncontrolled health conditions, access to healthy food, and transportation). By addressing these challenges, these programs are reducing EMS calls, emergency room visits, and hospital readmissions. They are also helping people to remain living in their own homes by connecting them with primary (vs. emergency) care and other community resources.

Strengthening Falls Prevention Efforts –

One of the frequently utilized resources accessed by community paramedicine programs are falls screening and fall prevention classes. GWAAR strongly supports grants to expand community paramedicine programs **and the grants, included in this legislation, to provide \$200,000 in 2025-26 and again in 2026-27 to support the falls prevention work of the Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging.** Fear of falling or fall-related anxiety is highly prevalent among older adults. This fear often leads to reduced physical activity, social isolation, and increased, rather than decreased, fall risk. Falls are a common cause of injury and disability and are associated with a high volume of EMS calls, emergency department visits, hospitalizations and nursing home admissions. To continue the success of community paramedicine programs, valuable community resources to address falls prevention awareness and initiatives must also be available. Falls prevention requires shifting to proactive behaviors like regular exercise, removing home hazards, medication reviews, and consistent use of assistive devices. Effective behavioral changes for older adults often involve structured programs that build confidence, reduce fear of falling, and improve daily safety habits. To ensure the continued success of community paramedicine, we must also ensure that the resources they refer patients to—like evidence-based falls prevention classes—remain available and well-funded.

WAAN and GWAAR respectfully ask for your support of **AB 970**. By shifting from a reactive emergency model to a proactive, community-centered model, we can help Wisconsinites age with dignity in the homes they love.

Thank you for your time and leadership on this issue.

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.

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