



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 973 re: Grants for Economic Support Specialists and making an appropriation

Thank you for this opportunity to share testimony in support of AB 973. 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).

Both WAAN) and 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 973, a vital recommendation from the Speaker's Task Force on Elder Services.

Assembly Bill 973 provides **one-time grant funding of \$1 million to build on the successful integration of an economic support (ES) specialist in the ADRC of La Crosse by awarding grants to fund an ES specialist in Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) in 10 Counties where co-location is not already occurring.** This pilot project aims to expedite the processing of Medicaid applications for ADRC customers, improve the ADRCs and Income Maintenance Consortia's reach to customers who are unable to leave their home, and offer ES consultation with ADRC professionals on complicated cases to further improve their options counseling.

Medicaid applications can be difficult for older adults and those with disabilities—particularly those facing transportation barriers, hospitalization, or lack of digital literacy. Too often, eligible individuals are denied support simply because they cannot navigate the bureaucracy. Embedding an ES specialist within the ADRC transforms this process from a reactive hurdle into a proactive, person-centered service.

We respectfully urge your support of AB 973. Investing in this community-centered model will help ADRC customers achieve faster Medicaid application processing, increased access to needed assistance, and the benefits of expert collaboration between ES Specialists and ADRC professionals.

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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