



**Statewide Caregiver Support Meeting
Advocacy Update
March 13, 2026**

Last chance, **Senate committees must take action this week!**

ACTION ALERT:

Your Help is Needed to Get the Elder Services Task Force Bills Across the Finish Line

The Wisconsin state legislature's bipartisan Speaker's Task Force on Elder Service developed a legislative package earlier this year to identify ways to improve the quality of life for older Wisconsinites. The package included six legislative bills and two associated funding bills. In late February, the State Assembly passed all eight bills proposed by the Task Force. **The clock is ticking to get these bills passed by the State Senate which is scheduled to wrap up on March 17!** To get the bills in front of the Governor and signed into law, they must first be passed by the committees highlighted in the full action alert and the full Senate.

Take Action: Contact your State Senator this week to share with them how legislation proposed by the Speaker's Task Force on Elder Services would impact you, others you care about, and/or people in your community. Ask them to urge committee passage of the bills and get them on the calendar for a vote by the full State Senate. To find out who your state Senator is enter your home address in the "Who Are My Legislators?" box found on this page -

<https://legis.wisconsin.gov/>. **Read the full Action Alert here:**

<https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2008948>

ACTION ALERT:

Contact Your State Senator and Ask Them to Support the FoodShare Funding Needed

Take Action: Contact your State Senator to share with them how important the FoodShare program is for low-income older people and family caregivers and ask them to support the funding needed to ensure that Wisconsinites continue to have access to food assistance. Let them know how continued FoodShare funding, as well as benefit restrictions, would impact you, others you care about, and/or people in your community. To find out who your state Senator is enter your home address in the "Who Are My Legislators?" box found on this page - <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/>. Please contact your state Senator and ask them to support the additional funding needed for FoodShare. **Read the full Action Alert here:**

<https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2008947>



- **Patient Representative (Next-of-Kin) Legislation: Senate Action Alert (AB 598/SB 578)**

Contacts with your State Senator regarding SB 578 – Patient Representatives (Next-of-Kin) legislation are needed this week!

In Feb., AB 598 passed in the full Assembly by a vote of 77-18. **Three Assembly substitute amendments (ASA) were offered on the bill shortly before it was passed.** Patient advocates had not even seen Assembly Substitute Amendment 3 prior to its adoption (ASA3 - https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2025/related/amendments/ab598/asa3_ab598). Note, a substitute amendment on a bill (if approved) replaces the entirety of the bill with another bill.

This legislation allows for the designation of a decision-maker based on a hierarchical list set in statute, if a patient does not have a Power of Attorney for Health care (or Guardian of the Person) and becomes unable to make medical decisions. These new decision-makers are referred to as patient representatives. The bill passed in the Assembly (ASA3-AB 598) also includes hospital price transparency language.

This legislation would benefit from bringing together all stakeholders, including patient advocates, to ensure any new decision-making process addresses hospital discharge concerns without doing any harm to medically incapacitated persons. **The amendments reviewed to date do not address the core issues of concern to patient advocates, and recent changes raise additional questions for advocates.** See the **press release** issued by Survival Coalition and the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network - <https://www.wispolitics.com/2026/survival-coalition-wisconsin-aging-advocacy-network-statement-on-passage-of-ab-598-bill-lets-hospital-pick-a-decision-maker-puts-patients-rights-at-risk/>.

Action Alert: There is still time to prevent this legislation from becoming law. **State Senators may be voting on this bill next week!** The Senate is planning to meet on March 17.

Take Action: Contact your State Senator to share with them how Senate Bill 578 could impact you, others you care about, and/or people in your community. To find out who your state Senator is, enter your home address in the “Who Are My Legislators?” box found on this page - <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/>.

- **Caregiver Designation Legislation Update (AB 798/SB 795)**

In late December 2025, the Caregiver Designation legislation was formally introduced. In the 2023-2025 legislative session, Wisconsin created a process that offers people the option to have emergency contact information included in their electronic record when applying for or renewing their driver’s license, learner’s permit, or state identification ([Wisconsin Department of Transportation Emergency contact](#)). The Caregiver Designation legislation builds upon the

emergency contact information process by also providing for an option for people to designate themselves as the primary caregiver for up to three people in their electronic record.

In early February, this legislation was passed by the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government and the Assembly Transportation Committee. **In mid-Feb., the full Senate passed this legislation. Unfortunately, the Assembly Transportation Committee did not meet to vote on this legislation, and the full Assembly held its last floor period last month without taking up this important legislation.** This common-sense legislation linking care-recipient contact information to a driver's license or state ID helps to prevent crisis situations where a person with complex needs might go for hours or even days without care. **Advocacy must continue to get this legislation introduced and passed early in the next legislative session.**

- **Memory Care Designation Legislation Update**

Memory Care legislation ([AB-984](#)/[SB-959](#)) creating requirements for the use of a “memory care designation” by community-based residential facilities was introduced in the Assembly in late Jan. AB 984 was referred to the Assembly Committee on Health, Aging and Long-Term Care. In early Feb., the Senate companion bill for this legislation was introduced by Senator Quinn and was referred to the Senate Committee on Health. **The Senate Health Committee held a public hearing on 2-12-26 and unanimously recommended passage of the bill on 2-17-26. Unfortunately, the Assembly bill did not advance quickly enough in committee to make the Assembly’s last floor period held last month. This legislation will not be signed into law this session. Advocacy for this critically needed legislation must continue so this bill can be signed into law next session.**

- **Volunteer Driver Insurance Protections Update**

GWAAR has been 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. Sen. James, who serves Senate Dist. 23, drafted legislation to protect volunteer drivers. **This legislation, though drafted, remains unintroduced.**

Last fall, the State Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OCI) distributed a survey to state insurance agencies. The survey was intended to obtain information regarding which agencies provided coverage of volunteer drivers without further evaluating the drivers for a business use policy (which costs more). In Jan. 2026, OCI included the survey results in an updated Volunteer Driver Fact Sheet (<https://oci.wi.gov/Documents/Consumers/PI-236.pdf>). **The fact sheet includes a list of 141 insurance companies that provide coverage to volunteer drivers; unfortunately, the list does not identify which of the 27% of companies (or 38 companies) may impose a surcharge on volunteer drivers.** Without the identifying information, GWAAR does not believe this list will help volunteer driver programs to educate their drivers on where they could obtain insurance coverage without their premiums significantly raising or help the

drivers to find insurance if their current policy is dropped due to their service as a volunteer driver.

OCI informed GWAAR that they will not be further categorizing or sorting the list. Since the release of the list, Sen. James indicated he understands the frustration and confusion for volunteer drivers and programs; however, given the list of over 100 companies that will not charge a surcharge, he does not feel it would be responsible public policy to seek to solve this problem with a blanket mandate on the auto insurance industry. He further suggested that it might be helpful for GWAAR (or others) to compile their own list of companies that don't hinder volunteer drivers.

On Jan. 20, 2026, GWAAR submitted a public records request to the Wisconsin OCI seeking the results of OCI's 2025 insurer survey. On Feb. 18, GWAAR received OCI's response which included a written statement regarding **OCI's partial denial of our request** (based upon cited state statutes and prior court cases). OCI shared the questions they included in their survey of insurance agencies and a list of 141 companies offering coverage in Wisconsin for volunteer drivers. Importantly, **they did not identify which of those companies would not impose a surcharge on volunteer drivers.**

GWAAR plans to continue collecting stories regarding volunteer drivers' experiences with auto insurance, both successful and unsuccessful, in hopes of preparing our own list to help inform volunteer drivers and programs. In addition to this qualitative data, we believe quantitative data will also be needed to advance this legislation next session. To help with our data needs, we will continue to share our story collection link - <https://bit.ly/4b8X3b2> and will be asking programs to consider providing us data related to increased ride costs when volunteer drivers aren't available and to report on rides that were unable to be provided. This information will be used to support future transportation budget requests. The need to provide protection for volunteer drivers from denial of insurance coverage or higher insurance premiums remains a very real concern for volunteer drivers, volunteer driver programs, and the many Wisconsinites who depend on volunteer drivers.

Save the Date Reminder: WAAN 2026 Aging Advocacy Day of Action

Mark your calendars, on Wed., **May 6, 2026**, the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (**WAAN**) will host a "**Day of Action**" including a virtual training followed by an online campaign. We will use this day to celebrate Older Americans Month and lift priority aging network issues for the next budget and legislative session. Our day of action will be complemented by local, in-district meetings held by WAAN core members throughout the state. **Local meeting hosts are encouraged to schedule in-district meetings between late March and the end of October 2026.** Stay tuned for more information.

