

2021-2023 Joint Finance Committee Budget Summary

The legislature's Joint Finance Committee (JFC) has completed their work on the 2021-2023 state budget. Below is a summary of some of the budget decisions impacting older adults and family caregivers in the areas of Aging and Disability Resource Centers, caregiver supports, health and long-term care services, broadband expansion, transportation, and housing.

Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs)

Funded:

- **An additional \$3 million included to expand Dementia Care Specialist (DCS) services statewide (adds 18 DCSs in ADRCs and 7 tribal DCS positions).** This proposal was also included in the Governor's budget.*

Not Funded:

- No additional funding provided to fully fund the **Aging and Disability Resource Centers' base contract services.***
- No additional funding provided to expand/equalize critical ADRC services across the state to:
 - Fully Fund **Elder Benefit Specialists** statewide*
 - Expand **Caregiver Support and Programs to address the needs of caregivers of adults with disabilities age 19 to 59.** This proposal was in the final report of the Governor's Task Force on Caregiving and had been included in the Governor's budget.*
 - Expand **Health Promotion Services***
 - Expand **Care Transition Services***
 - Fund **Aging and Disability Resources in Tribes** (includes Disability Benefit Specialist and Aging & Disability Resource Specialist positions) This proposal was included in the Governor's budget.*
 - Fully Fund **Aging and Disability Resource Support Systems***

Other support for older adults and/or family caregivers

Funded:

- **An increase of \$250,000 in each year of the budget for the Alzheimer's Family and Caregiver Support Program (AFCSP).** The Governor's budget included an increase of \$500,000 in each year of the budget.*

Not Funded/or included:

- **Caregiver Assessments** -no funding provided to pilot the evidence-based Tailored Caregiver Assessment and Referral (TCARE) protocol designed to support family members providing care to

- adults of any age with chronic or acute health conditions. This proposal was in the final report of the Governor’s Task Force on Caregiving and was included in the Governor’s budget.*
- The **Caregiver Tax Credit** (Credit for Caring) included in the JFC budget. This proposal was in the final report of the Governor’s Task Force on Caregiving and was included in the Governor’s budget.*
- The **CARE Act** (require hospitals to allow caregiver designation and to provide instruction for patient care after discharge) was not included in the JFC budget. This proposal was in the final report of the Governor’s Task Force on Caregiving and was included in the Governor’s budget.*
- **Wisconsin Family Medical Leave Act amendments** were not included in the JFC budget. This proposal was in the final report of the Governor’s Task Force on Caregiving and was included in the Governor’s budget.*
- No funding provided for grant **funding to develop, administer, and conduct free guardian training for new family and volunteer guardians**. This proposal was in the final report of the Governor’s Task Force on Caregiving and was included in the Governor’s budget.*
- No **falls prevention funding** provided to reduce Wisconsin’s high rate of deadly falls through a statewide support center and proven, locally delivered prevention programs.*
- No **long-term care ombudsman funding** provided for two additional ombudsman positions. The ombudsman program provides advocacy services for individuals age 60 and older who reside in a long-term care setting or are participating in long-term care home and community-based services (e.g., Family Care, IRIS). The Governor’s budget included funding for the two positions. *
- No funding increase for the Telecommunications Assistance Program (TAP) to provide financial assistance for hearing aids or creation of a **Hearing Aid Assistance Pilot Program**. *

Direct Care Workforce & Medical Assistance

Funded:

- **An increase in the Medicaid nursing home reimbursement rate of more than 12%** with a portion of the second-year increase designated to support staff working in the facilities who provide direct care services. Funding increases for the nursing home reimbursement rate were included in the final report of the Governor’s Task Force on Caregiving and was included in the Governor’s budget.*
- **An additional \$40 million (GPR) in the biennium for the Family Care Direct Care Worker fund** (this funding is used by Family Care managed care organizations to provide additional funding to providers of direct care service to address worker recruitment and retention challenges). This proposal was in the final report of the Governor’s Task Force on Caregiving and was included in the Governor’s budget.*
- **An increase in the hourly rates paid for Medicaid Personal Care Services to \$20.69 on 1/01/21 and \$22.35 on 1/01/23** (8% each year). Funding increases for the Medicaid Personal Care Services rate were in the final report of the Governor’s Task Force on Caregiving and included in the Governor’s budget.*
- **An additional \$473,000 GPR in the second year of the budget to increase the Medicaid Home Health reimbursement rate.**
- **Funding to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for outpatient mental health and substance abuse services by 15% effective 1/01/22.**
- **A 40% increase in Medicaid dental reimbursement rates effective 1/01/22.**

Not funded/or included:

- **Medicaid (BadgerCare) Expansion** – to provide coverage for people with incomes between 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL) to 138% of FPL. Full expansion of BadgerCare would add coverage for approximately 90,000 people. The Governor also proposed moving Wisconsin to a state marketplace and providing additional subsidies to people between 138% and 250% FPL to make marketplace insurance plans more affordable for many people. This proposal was included in the final report of the Governor’s Task Force on Caregiving and was included in the Governor’s budget.*
- **Home- and Community-Based Waiver Programs Rate Bands** - directing the Department of Health Services to develop a statewide rate band that would establish equitable and sustainable minimum rates for home and community-based long-term care supports (i.e., Family Care, IRIS, Partnership). This proposal was in the final report of the Governor’s Task Force on Caregiving and was included in the Governor’s budget.*
- **Direct Support Professional Training** - directing the Department of Health Services to develop and implement a pilot program to provide person-centered direct support professional training to achieve consistent standards of healthcare practice and development of a career ladder for caregivers leading to certification as a nurse aide. This proposal was in the final report of the Governor’s Task Force on Caregiving and was included in the Governor’s budget.*
- **Earnings Disregard for Direct Care Workers** - allow direct support professionals to disregard a portion of their income related to caregiving without losing eligibility to the Wisconsin Shares childcare subsidy program through the WI Department of Children and Families. This proposal was in the final report of the Governor’s Task Force on Caregiving and was included in the Governor’s budget.*
- **Home Care Provider Registry** - requiring the Department of Health Services to conduct a one-year pilot program to create a home care provider registry to support home- and community-based long-term care support programs, consumers, and vendors of direct care services. This proposal was in the final report of the Governor’s Task Force on Caregiving and was included in the Governor’s budget.*

Other Health Services/Behavior Health

Funded:

- **An additional \$1 million annually was also provided to increase grant funding for federally qualified health centers (FQHCs).**
- **An additional \$1 million annually to increase grant funding for free and charitable clinics.**
- **\$10 million in FY 2022 (to be held in the JFC program supplements appropriation) for Regional Crisis Response System Grants** to fund regional crisis services or facilities.
- **\$375,000 annually for Crisis Intervention Training grants** - for mental health crisis training for law enforcement and correctional officers.
- **\$70,000 over the biennium to expand the Behavioral Health Bed Tracker** to include not only psychiatric bed tracking but also information on the availability of peer run respite beds and crisis stabilization beds.

Broadband Provisions (High-speed Internet)

Funded:

- **Authorization to borrow \$125 million and to reallocate \$4 million of unencumbered Universal Service Fund appropriations to fund broadband expansion grants (\$129 million over the**

biennium) – for construction of broadband infrastructure to increase internet access in unserved and underserved areas of the state. JFC removed grant eligibility for the municipalities. The Governor’s budget provided \$125 million in each year of the budget.

Not funded/or included:

- **Broadband Planning Grants and Technical Assistance** – Create a new annual GPR appropriation to provide the PSC \$300,000 each year to provide grants. These grants were included in the Governor’s budget.*
- **Broadband Line Extension Grants** – Create a new annual appropriation for a broadband line extension grant program and provide \$5.25 million to provide grants to underserved residential properties to cover costs (up to \$4,000 per recipient) of connecting to broadband service. These grants were included in the Governor’s budget.*
- **Broadband Consumer Protections** - requiring broadband service providers to meet certain service requirements, including prohibiting a broadband service provider from denying service to residential customers based on race or income.*
- **Internet Assistance for low-income individuals/families** - On behalf of families at or below 200% of the federal poverty level, the Dept. of Children and Families will work with community action agencies to reimburse the appropriate Internet service providers monthly.*

Transportation

Funded:

- **A 2.5% increase in funding for the Specialized Transportation Capital Assistance Program (s.85.22) in each year of the budget** to assist with replacement or acquisition of new transit vehicles and expand mobility management services. The Governor’s budget includes this proposal. The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) requested a 20% increase in the s.85.22 funding.
- **\$250,000 annual increase in WETAP (employment transportation program) funding.**
- **A 2.5% increase in paratransit funding in each year of the budget.**

Not funded:

- **Mass Transit (s.85.20) funding increases.* Instead, the JFC budget flat funds tier B and C funding levels and decreases funding by a one-time 50% reduction (over \$41 million for the biennium) for Tier A-1 (Milwaukee) and Tier A-2 (Madison).** For the 2023-2025 biennium the funding amounts would return to the base funding amount for 2020-21. (JFC is indicating the funding reductions in 2022 can be made up with federal COVID funds received by these municipalities.) The Governor’s budget includes a 2.5% increase in funding.
- **Transit Capital Assistance Grants – no grant program established or funded.** The Governor’s budget includes \$10 million annually to a newly created continuing appropriations to establish a transit capital assistance grant program administered by DOT.*
- **Specialized Transportation Assistance for Counties (s.85.21) – no funding increase provided.** WAAN requested a 2.5% increase in funding.
- **Tribal Elderly Transportation Grants (s.85.215) – no funding increase provided.** The Governor’s budget requested base level funding for the program be converted from tribal gaming revenues to a newly created appropriation from the segregated transportation fund and increase base funding for the program by 5% in each year of the budget.*

Housing

Funded:

- **An additional \$600,000 annually for the housing assistance program.***

Not Funded/included:

- **A new grant to support the hiring of housing navigators throughout the state.***
- **Index the parameters of the Homestead Tax Credit** for inflation to preserve the credit's value (beginning in 2023) and increasing the maximum income threshold to \$30,000.*
- **Increase funding for homeless prevention programs.**
- No increase/changes to **State Housing Tax Credits** to help address the need for more affordable housing.*
- **Increase the qualifying income limit for the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) property tax deferral loan program** that provides loans to qualifying older adult homeowners to help pay for property taxes.*
- **Establish a \$1,000,000 forgivable matching loan fund for low-income older homeowners** to add assistive technology, home energy conservation measures, or accessibility modifications.*

The budget now moves to the full legislature for amendments and/or approval. The Assembly and Senate are expected to vote on the budget early in the week of June 28th, with a goal of advancing the budget to the Governor's desk by the end of the state fiscal year (6/30/21). The Governor will then decide whether to veto the full budget, make partial (line-item) vetoes to the budget, or approve the budget as presented.

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