



April 24, 2020

The Honorable Tony Evers
Governor
115 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Evers,

We appreciate the flexibilities provided by you and the Legislature in 2019 Act 185, however, we remain in dire need for emergency funding to minimize disruptions in our services for our most vulnerable populations. Collectively, our members represent the diverse spectrum of Long-Term Care. We provide both residential and non-residential services as well as community-based home health or person care, that enable assisted living residents, older adults, people with disabilities and older adults who rely on long-term supports to live and work in their local communities. Both long-term care participants and the providers who serve them have suffered extreme hardships during this public health emergency. As you draw down additional federal funding to support Medicaid services as allowed under federal COVID-19 response legislation, we ask you to invest in Wisconsin's most vulnerable population and their caregivers by providing emergency funding for hardship and supplemental payments for overtime, hazard pay, COVID-19 testing, protective personal equipment, and workforce retention strategies.

Workforce retention

2019 Act 185/The 1135 Emergency Waiver recognized the need for funding to stabilize and retain providers adversely impacted by the public health emergency. Many of our provider members have implemented creative options to maintain their employees and services to the maximum degree possible; the impact on their budgets has been devastating and is unsustainable.

While at least one Managed Care Organization has offered supplemental funding, this is not currently a uniform practice. **Unfortunately, explicit in the MCO contract, DHS cannot direct them to make the supplemental payments.** Allowing for workforce retention funding while we are in this moment of crisis will not only benefit the participants we serve, but continued employment for those who are on the front lines providing care.

COVID-19 Testing and Protective Personal Equipment (PPE)

Given the existing shortage and distribution methodology of PPE, the Long-Term Care workforce is often at the top of government guidelines and local public health requirements, but at bottom of the distribution list. Many long-term care participants have pre-existing conditions, making them high risk for COVID-19, and workers travel from home to home, increasing the risk of infection for both participants and their caregivers. Many long-term care participants also have complex and personal health care needs that require close human contact. To protect the health of all, we need more PPE and COVID-19 testing for residents and staff caregivers.

Thank you for your continued support. The disability and aging communities stand ready to share their front-line stories with you to inform these important decisions and continue to be partners with you to ensure the health and safety of all.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Davidson
CEO, DSPN

Lisa Pugh
Executive Director, The Arc Wisconsin

Beth Swedeen
Co-Chair, Survival Coalition

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CC:
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