

Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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To: Members, Wisconsin Senate

From: Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

Subject: Our Concerns regarding the Budget Repair Bill at the Current Stage of the Process

A lot has happened since Governor McCallum unveiled his Budget Repair Bill. Various constituencies, including disability organizations, have expressed their opinions regarding the pros and cons of the governor's proposal, the Wisconsin Counties Association proposal, the actions of the Joint Committee on Finance, and the Assembly's version of the budget. We will not recount our reactions to each of those stages, but we would like to communicate our priorities as you undertake the remaining steps of the process:

1. Protect disability services and the Medicaid program.

The COP and CIP program increases were cut substantially by the governor's vetoes. We ask that you spare those programs, as well as other disability programs, from any further cuts.

2. Protect Shared Revenues

It is clear to us that any cuts in shared revenues will have a detrimental impact on county administered and contracted human services. We encourage you to minimize erosion of this crucial funding source.

3. Protect General School Aids and Categorical Aids

There was no increase in funding for special education in the 2001-03 biennial budget. Any cuts made now would reduce the funding for students with disabilities below 1999 - 2001 levels. That would be a serious blow to parents and school districts.

4. Eliminate the increase in co-payments for non-generic drugs under Medicaid which is in the Assembly version of the budget.

We consider this change to be an example of chiseling away at poor people an inch at a time. There are many conditions, including serious mental illness and seizure disorders, for which there is no viable generic drug option. Users of these medications will be locked into an increased expenditure.

5. Consider revenue increases as necessary.

A number of revenue adjustments have been put forward in recent months, including the elimination of some sales tax exemptions. We consider the funding for basic educational and long term care services to be a high enough priority for the quality of life in Wisconsin that if these services can only be protected by increasing revenues, then the legislature should consider that option.

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