

Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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April 15, 2002

To: Senator Chuck Chvala
Representative Scott Jensen
Representative Spencer Black
Senator Russ Decker
Representative Steve Foti
Representative John Gard
Senator Bob Jauch
Senator Mary Panzer

From: Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

Subject: Conference Committee decisions which will impact Wisconsin's citizens with disabilities

There are several important decision items which are still unresolved in the Budget Repair process which could potentially have a substantial (positive or negative) impact on people with disabilities and their families. These issues are summarized below, accompanied by the Survival Coalition recommendation for a specific resolution of each issue.

1. Shared Revenues. We consider shared resources to be a crucial part of the funding base for community-based disability services. Any reductions in shared revenues will directly result in cuts in services for people with disabilities.

Recommendation: Adopt the Senate version, which retains more Shared Revenue funding.

2. Categorical Aids for Special Education. The 2001-03 biennial budget session was particularly unfortunate for students with disabilities. Even though the total cost of providing special education services has risen substantially since 1999, the legislature did not approve any increase

2. Categorical Aids for Special Education. The 2001-03 biennial budget session was particularly unfortunate for students with disabilities. Even though the total cost of providing special education services has risen substantially since 1999, the legislature did not approve any increase in Categorical Aids to local school districts for the current biennium. If this situation is not changed, there will be a predictable statewide erosion of special education quality.

In particular, students with severe disabilities living in the poorest school districts will be at the greatest risk of not receiving the support they need.

Recommendation: Adopt the Categorical Aids increase in the Senate version.

3. Task Force to plan the future of the State Centers for the Developmentally Disabled. The Assembly version of the budget includes a recommendation from the Legislative Council Special Committee on Developmental Disabilities. This proposal would create a systematic planning process for the future of the 3 state institutions serving people with developmental disabilities, an extremely expensive component of the disability service system which serves a very small number of people.

This measure (SB 231) also passed unanimously out of the Senate Committee on Human Services and Aging, and passed the full Senate by voice vote. It is not only supported by the Survival Coalition; it is also supported by the Wisconsin Counties Association. The two primary unions representing workers at the Centers (AFSCME and SEIU) do not oppose it.

Recommendation: Adopt the Assembly version.

4. Mental Health Parity. Disability advocates have been trying for several years to end health insurance discrimination services against insured persons who need mental health services. In this session, "mental health parity" passed the Senate (SB 157), but did not get out of committee in the Assembly. In discussing this measure with a large number of Assembly members it appears that a majority of the Assembly supports the idea.

Recommendation: Adopt the Senate version.

5. Additional recommendations from the Developmental Disabilities Legislative Council Committee.

There are several measures contained within AB 590 (which passed the Assembly) that will improve the service system for persons with developmental disabilities at minimal cost. These

ideas grew out of several months of serious effort by the Developmental Disabilities Legislative Council Committee. The Survival Coalition fully supports these provisions.

Recommendation: Support the Assembly version.

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