



WHCA / WiCAL

Wisconsin Health Care Association

Wisconsin Center for Assisted Living

LeadingAge™
Wisconsin
Better Services for Better Aging



December 3, 2014

Governor Scott Walker
Room 115 East
Wisconsin State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Walker:

Our organizations individually and jointly request your forthcoming state budget proposal include funding sufficient to provide a 5% increase in Medicaid funding for skilled nursing facilities and all providers caring for our state's frail elderly and disabled under Wisconsin's Family Care Program. While we fully appreciate the state's current financial condition, the magnitude and intensity of the needs of Wisconsin citizens who receive and provide long-term care and assisted living services compel immediate attention and investment.

Collectively, our organizations represent the majority of Wisconsin's long-term care facilities. Our members are the source of employment for tens of thousands of dedicated individuals. They provide daily services and supports to persons with disabilities and chronic care needs, including the state's most frail elders and persons with physical, intellectual and developmental disabilities. The harsh reality confronting Wisconsin's long-term care provider community is that the level of staffing, wages, and benefits providers can offer their employees, as well as the quality of care and life they can provide their residents, is predominantly defined by the level of Medicaid funding contained in the state budget.

We appreciate that as Governor you have been sensitive to the consequences Medicaid's historical fiscal failings have presented for all individuals who provide and receive long-term care services in Wisconsin. However, the financial magnitude and human consequences of those failings have now reached unprecedented heights.

Inadequate Medicaid payment rates have virtually paralyzed long-term care providers' ability to attract and retain a workforce essential to meet the ever-escalating demands of the baby boomer tsunami that has come crashing down on our state's health care system. Predictably, but disturbingly, as more and better paying jobs have surfaced in Wisconsin's recovering economy, long-term care providers in all settings are increasingly unable to maintain their existing workforce. Efforts to fill expanding caregiver vacancies, much less attract a larger workforce, have proven unsuccessful. It is painfully apparent that will continue to be the case unless they are enabled to offer more competitive wages and benefits. Clearly, that cannot happen unless the Medical Assistance Program – overwhelmingly the state's largest consumer of long-term care services – steps forward to fulfill its obligation to pay rates that will support the necessary cost of providing care to program recipients.

We have enthusiastically supported your administration in promoting redesign of a long-term care delivery system that offers more support and services to elders, individuals with dementia, and persons with disabilities. But the vision we share can never be realized without a public commitment of additional funds necessary to achieve those ends.

We recognize the funding increase we have requested is not insignificant. However, the unavoidable fiscal and human consequences that would flow in the wake of a failure to make that investment would be far greater.

It is critical the investment of budget funding we seek be recognized as absolutely essential to preserve citizen access to quality long-term care and assisted living services throughout our state. It must also be recognized as essential for maintaining the economic health, vitality, and employment in all Wisconsin communities where that care is currently provided.

Sincerely,



Tom Moore
Executive Director
Wisconsin Health Care Association



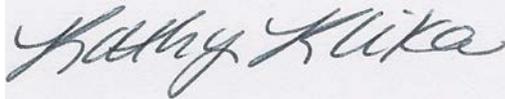
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