

April 14, 2020

Dear Wisconsin State Legislator:

This week the Wisconsin State Legislature is meeting to take legislative action in response to the ongoing COVID-19 situation in Wisconsin. While you are evaluating the proposal before you, AARP Wisconsin wishes to share our priorities for your consideration.

It appears that there is consensus around supporting the elimination of the one-week waiting period for UI and taking the steps necessary to claim the enhanced FMAP for Medicaid. We applaud that agreement and support it. There is also apparent harmony on extending RX prescriptions which is a good step for those who need their medications. We would like to see that coupled with actions to reduce the high cost of prescription drugs.

In evaluating the rest of the proposals we suggest the following principles serve as guidelines:

- There needs to be adequate funding and staffing to provide for a robust public health response to the current situation.
- Safety net programs, including SNAP, need to be fully supported and in many cases enhanced to meet the economic suffering of Wisconsinites without work, food and health care.
- DHS should be given maximum flexibility to apply for funding and waivers from CMS and other funding sources.
- Coverage for testing, diagnosis, treatment, prescriptions, and vaccines related to COVID-19 should be mandated.
- Telehealth and the high-speed internet service to support it should be encouraged and access to those services should be enhanced and funded.
- Changes to insurance which allow greater access to health care and reduced or no cost services should be supported.
- Employers should be encouraged and supported in providing paid leave when possible.
- Consideration should be given to whether certain regulations for health care workers and providers could be temporarily reduced to allow a greater available

workforce to assist in providing health care during this crisis. However, no permanent reduction in regulation or credentialing should be done that would have a long term negative effect on the quality of care or the educational standard for health care providers. After the pandemic we will need Wisconsin to return to its high quality of care with our reputation unharmed from the temporary response that was necessary in these times.

- All licensed health care providers, especially advanced practice registered nurses, should be allowed to practice at the full scope their licensing allows.
- We need to be mindful of the problems of social isolation in long term care facilities and the need for those who care for their loved ones in these facilities for information on the health of their loved ones and for ways and methods to communicate with them. Funding should be made available for equipment and staffing to provide virtual visits.
- Family caregivers should be fully supported with the inclusion of the CARE Act and the Wisconsin Credit for Caring Act. This would help alleviate the financial burden of caregiving and allow critical family caregivers to get much-needed education to care for loved ones once they are discharged from a hospital.
- Age should not be a criterion for the prioritization of access to care, treatment or equipment.

It is important to AARP Wisconsin and to older adults that the information about the situation in the state and the steps taken to deal with it are very transparent and nondiscriminatory. We have a significant older population in Wisconsin and their needs and concerns should not be overlooked in this process.

If you have question about AARP Wisconsin's position on this or any other legislative matter, please feel free to contact Helen Marks Dicks at hmdicks@aarp.org or 608-332-9542.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam Wilson', with a stylized, flowing script.

Sam Wilson
AARP Wisconsin State Director