

ACTION ALERT: 2025-27 State Budget

Week Two

4-21-25

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The state legislature's Joint Finance Committee (JFC) has two remaining public hearings on the 2025-2027 State Budget. The remaining public hearing schedule is:

- April 28 - Hayward High School Auditorium - 10320 Greenwood Lane Hayward, WI 54843; 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- April 29 – Northcentral Technical College - Center for Health Sciences 1000 West Campus Drive Wausau, WI 54401 Wausau, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

See [Tips for Testifying Before JFC at State Budget Hearings](#). See the Joint Finance Committee 2025-27 Biennial Budget [Public Comment Website](#) for additional information, including the link to submit written budget testimony via the JFC's online portal.

With so much at stake for older adults, people living with disabilities, and caregivers in this budget, we must use every opportunity available to provide input on the 2025-27 state budget. **This is week three of the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network's (WAAN) four-week state budget campaign. The campaign includes strategies for connecting with JFC members, your own state Senator and Assembly Representative, as well as opportunities to educate the public and media about WAAN's budget priority issues and their impact on your life and/or the lives of those you care for and about.**

Your stories are important and impactful!

To help coordinate our messages, WAAN created a **theme for each week of the campaign**. The themes each week cover issues of importance to older people and family caregivers.

Themes for the remaining two weeks are:

- April 21st – **Health and Independence**: This week will focus on funding for Reducing Falls Among Older Adults and the Direct Care Workforce
- April 28th **Knowledge is Power**: This week our focus will be on funding for Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs), the Elder Benefit Specialist Program, and the Wisconsin Guardianship Support Center

Week Three (4/21 – 4/25/25) - Bullet/Talking Points for this week's "Health and Independence" theme -

Reducing Falls Among Older Adults

- Nationally, more than one in four older adults experiences a fall each year; Wisconsin has the nation's highest rate of deadly falls among older adults.
- In 2019, 83% of hip fracture deaths and 88% of emergency department visits and hospitalizations for hip fractures in older adults – a common cause of both long-term nursing home admissions and rehabilitation stays – were caused by falls.
- In 2022, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Wisconsin responded to over 130,000 falls, and the number of falls that EMS responds to are increasing by nearly 10,000 a year statewide.

- An estimated \$1 billion is spent annually on falls-related health costs in Wisconsin which includes Medicare, Medicaid, and out-of-pocket expenses.

Budget ask: To reduce the high rate of deadly falls among older adults in Wisconsin, we request a \$450,000 annual state budget appropriation to support the Falls Free Wisconsin Center.

For more information, see WAAN's [Reducing Falls Issue Brief](#).

Direct Care Workforce

- The direct care workforce provides in-home care for thousands of older adults and people with disabilities, including daily support to nearly 57,000 Family Care and nearly 27,000 IRIS (Include, Respect, I Self-direct) participants.
- 75% of personal care agencies responding to a survey indicated having at least one open caregiver position each week and over 25% have 5 or more open caregiver positions each week.
- Family members have been stepping up to fill the care gaps left by unfilled shifts and waiting lists for services, but caregiver exhaustion and a lack of family members and other supporters to fill all the gaps and meet all the care needs is putting many older adults and people with disabilities at risk of hospitalization and more expensive residential care.

Budget ask: To support the training, recruitment and retention of direct care professionals (DCPs): (1) Increase the Medicaid Personal Care (MAPC) rate (currently set at \$24.52/hour) to cover the actual cost of providing care (\$36.52/hour). (2) Create a state certification process for in-home caregiver training to better meet the needs of the variety of caregiving roles in the long-term care system and provide funding to support training of in-home care workers; (3) Support higher Medicaid rates for home and community-based services (HCBS) by providing continued funding to support the minimum fee schedule for adult HCBS services and increase the rates to provide a wage increase to \$17.25/hr.; and (4) Create an earned income disregard program to address the fiscal cliff for direct care professionals when applying for public benefits.

For more information, see WAAN's [Direct Care Workforce Issue Brief](#).

Actions needed this week:

Action Step 1 – Submit online comments to Joint Finance Committee (JFC) members related to one or both of the issues of the week (see talking points and issue brief links above. **Include how these issues or services (or lack of services) impact your life or the life of someone you care about.** Use JFC's online portal: www.legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments (If you prefer, your comments may also be submitted to the Joint Finance Committee using the following email address: budget.comments@legis.wisconsin.gov)

Action Step 2 – Send emails to your own state elected officials. Send one email to your state Assembly Representative and another to your state Senator. To find out who your state legislators are, and to find their contact information, go to <https://maps.legis.wisconsin.gov/> and enter your home address at the top of the page. **Let your legislators know how these issues impact you personally or those you serve. Be sure you**

Core member organizations

Aging and Disability Professionals Association of Wisconsin (ADPAW) • Alzheimer's Association Wisconsin Chapter Board on Aging and Long Term Care (BOALTC) • Wisconsin Adult Day Services Association (WADSA) Wisconsin Association of Area Agencies on Aging (W4A) • Wisconsin Association of Benefit Specialists (WABS) Wisconsin Association of Nutrition Directors (WAND) • Wisconsin Association of Senior Centers (WASC) Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance (WFACSA) • Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (WIHA) Wisconsin Senior Advocates • Wisconsin Senior Corps Association (WISCA) • Wisconsin Tribal Aging Unit Association

Mission

The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) works with and for all older adults by educating community members and policy makers on priority issues while advocating for meaningful change. Learn more at <https://gwaar.org/waan>.

include your address, so they know you are a constituent or are serving constituents in their district. Every member of the Assembly and Senate will eventually vote on the budget. In addition, they can bring your concerns to members of the JFC since they all have a “budget buddy” to make sure they each have a say in the budget.

Action Step 3 – Share this message with board/advisory council members, program participants, volunteers, community members and partners, and family and friends; ask them to take action too!

Optional Action Steps

Share your story (see [Five Steps for Creating Powerful Personal Testimony](#)). How do the programs or services in this week’s theme or the absence of these services and programs affect your life or the life of a family member, friend, or someone you serve. **In addition to sharing your personal story in your written comments to JFC and your own state legislators, consider one or more of these additional actions:**

- A. Write a letter to the editor!** Using your story and/or talking points on this week’s issues (see above) write a short letter to the editor to your local daily or weekly paper.
- B. Prepare articles for your agency newsletter related to these budget topics** (and/or submit an article to your local newspaper regarding this week’s issues).
- C. Attend an in-district listening session with your legislator(s).** Many legislators are holding listening sessions in their districts. Sign up for your legislators’ electronic newsletters and watch for opportunities for you to connect with them.
- D. Invite your legislators for a site visit or to attend an agency event or board meeting.** This is a great way to help your legislators hear about and see the great work you are doing.

Your voice matters! The more of us that participate in the hearings and the weekly campaign activities, the more legislators will hear about the issues important to aging advocates and older adults.

All WAAN issue briefs are available at: <https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2008488>.

Previously issued WAAN 2025-27 State Budget Action Alerts are available at:

- **Week One** - <https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2008518>
- **Week Two** - <https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2008529>

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