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For Immediate Release

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## **Disability Rights Wisconsin Encouraged by State of the State**

Disability Rights Wisconsin is encouraged by Governor Evers focus on initiatives important to children and adults with disabilities in the 2023 State of the State address including investments in mental health, education, and shared revenue.

“We are gratified that Governor Evers has addressed a number of significant measures important to people with disabilities,” stated DRW Executive Director Lea Kitz. We look forward to working with him and the Legislature on these and other issues that will move Wisconsin forward to improve the lives of people with disabilities throughout the state.”

DRW is on the frontline providing advocacy assistance to Wisconsinites with mental health conditions who are struggling to access treatment and support. We strongly support Governor Evers proposals to expand community based mental health services, including support for peer run services, Medicaid Community Support Program funding, crisis services, and mental health services for individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind. “Limited access to community based mental health care has resulted in people with mental illness being placed in costly out of home and institutional settings or confined in jails or prisons,” stated Barbara Beckert, Director External Advocacy. “Wisconsin must prioritize increased access to a continuum of community based mental health services, including access to housing.”

DRW also welcomes increased investments in education including school based mental health services. After reaching historic lows, Wisconsin’s special education reimbursement rate has crept upward only slightly in the past two budget cycles, leaving districts hard-pressed to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities. “It is essential that Wisconsin make significant increases in special education categorical aid,” stated Kit Kerschensteiner, Director of Legal and Advocacy Services.

Wisconsin has a proud tradition of bipartisan support for programs for children and adults with disabilities. As the budget moves forward, we look forward to working with legislators and Governor Evers to address the long-term care workforce crisis, increase access to accessible transportation, expand access to community based mental health services, address the needs of youth and adults with mental health conditions in the justice system, and ensure that children with significant disabilities can access community supports and special education services.

For additional information, see DRW's [2023-2025 Biennial Budget and Policy Priorities for Wisconsinites with Disabilities \(accessible PDF\)](#).

*Disability Rights Wisconsin is the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy system for the State of Wisconsin, charged with protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities and keeping them free from abuse and neglect.*