



Save IRIS

www.saveiris.org

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Statewide Group Forms to Restore the IRIS Program, Supports for Elderly and People with Disabilities, in the Budget

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 16, 2015

The shocking and unexpected elimination of a critical and cost-effective program that provides daily supports to people with disabilities and the elderly has caused thousands to band together across the state to save it.

People with disabilities and seniors who use a long term care program called IRIS (Include, Respect, I Self-Direct) found out on February 3rd that Governor Walker's 2015-2017 budget completely eliminates IRIS.

"We don't understand. This came out of the blue and will completely change our lives," says Amber Gilberg of Eau Claire who is an IRIS Participant and member of Save IRIS. "People like me rely on IRIS to choose and hire personal care workers who help with really important things like bathing, dressing, and getting meals."

In just the last week over 1500 people have lit up a social media campaign to save the program. They formed a coalition - Save IRIS - to save the unique self-directed program that serves more than 11,000 people statewide.

IRIS participants believe it doesn't make sense to eliminate the program because it gets government and bureaucracy out of the way and lets people make smart decisions about what's right for them or their loved one.

The state has said IRIS will be folded into another program, however many Save IRIS members fear the benefits of self-direction and cost-effective budget control will be lost.

"My life and care needs are complex," says Jessica Nell of Green Bay. "I have spent too much time in a nursing home. Moving to a medical model that takes away my control over my life is very frightening for me."

Save IRIS has launched a survey to get feedback from people statewide on the program's elimination. The survey can be found on the group's website, www.saveiris.org

"Save IRIS" is a coalition of IRIS participants and their allies dedicated to preserving IRIS, Wisconsin's only long-term care option that allows participants to completely self-direct their supports and services.

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