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Dear Joint Finance Committee Members,

Save IRIS is a nonpartisan grassroots movement dedicated to preserving and promoting self-direction and the IRIS program in Wisconsin. The IRIS program currently represents 29% (22,000) of long-term care (LTC) participants. On March 21 we sent you a letter addressing our concerns about proposed budget wording to clarify and ensure parity between all Medicaid LTC programs (IRIS, Family Care and CLTS) when addressing the caregiver workforce crisis.

As you develop a new budget proposal, we are reaching out to ask for your help. We are worried about the caregiver workforce crisis in Wisconsin and its impact on IRIS participants. As you know, the ability to recruit, retain and competitively pay care workers is one of the most difficult and critical problems facing ALL people utilizing long-term care services in Wisconsin. Participants in all home and community-based waivers look to the same workforce to have their care and support needs met and it is imperative that there is not an unintentional disparity created by only including one program and not the others in addressing the workforce crisis.

In the last session, Family Care was given additional funding to address caregiver workforce issues, however, IRIS and CLTS were not included. While we believe that this may have been an unintentional omission, we want to ensure that this does not inadvertently happen again in this budget. We respectfully request a budget motion that reflects the legislature's commitment to all Home and Community based LTC programs and the people who use them. Specifically, we ask that any funding provided to address the caregiver workforce crisis in the LTC system be allocated with parity to all LTC programs (IRIS, Family Care and CLTS). And that this not just be addressed in this upcoming budget but for the long-term. And that the term "Medicaid Long Term Care (LTC) programs" be used in budget and policy wording rather than one program name that may be unintentionally used to refer to all programs. Words are important and using "Family Care" (for example) to identify adult LTC programs, inadvertently eliminates IRIS.

We are available to talk with you further if you have questions. We encourage you to read [the stories the Survival Coalition collected](#) that explain firsthand the challenges people face in finding caregivers and how this has an impact on their daily lives.

Sincerely,

Julie Burish, Jason Endres, Nancy Gapinski, and Marion Holmberg

*"Save IRIS, Wisconsin's Self Direction Advocates" is a non-partisan association of IRIS participants and their allies dedicated to promoting self-direction in Wisconsin.*



[www.saveiris.org](http://www.saveiris.org)