



Milwaukee County

Supervisor Marina Dimitrijevic, 4th District

Date: February 9, 2012
To: Senate Committee on Health
Senator Leah Vukmir, Chair
From: Supervisor Marina Dimitrijevic, Milwaukee County Commission on Aging
4th Supervisory District, Milwaukee County
Re: Senate Bill 380, relating to removing the cap on enrollment of Family Care

Chairperson Vukmir, Committee members, thank you for allowing me to speak to you today. I am County Supervisor Marina Dimitrijevic. For the past eight years, I have served the residents of Bay View on the Milwaukee County Board. In that capacity, I represent about 52,000 City of Milwaukee residents. For comparison purposes, each Supervisor in Milwaukee County roughly represents about the same number of people as a State Representative in the Wisconsin Assembly.

The Chair is from Milwaukee County and is familiar with our programs. For those Committee members who represent other areas of Wisconsin, Milwaukee County administers a Family Care Managed Care Organization and separately contracts with the State to operate resource centers. Milwaukee County also is in negotiations to provide Family Care services in the counties of Kenosha and Racine.

As of November 2011, there were 37,560 total members served statewide in these long-term care programs (Family Care, Family Care Partnership, and the Program for All-inclusive Care for the Elderly). Of that statewide total, 27% of these residents live in Milwaukee County and 8,657 are enrolled in Family Care. The Milwaukee County Department of Family Care manages the care for 7,700 of those individuals. In its 2011 report, the non-partisan Legislative Audit Bureau found the Milwaukee County Department of Family Care to be fiscally sound. A short summary of their findings is attached to this written testimony.

Today, I urge the Legislature to comply immediately with last year's directive from the federal government to lift the enrollment cap on the Family Care program. Further legislative or administrative delay is unacceptable. The sluggish response to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services potentially jeopardizes federal funding and is resulting in the wrongful, and possibly illegitimate, denial of benefits. Inaction harms both elderly residents and persons with disabilities.

With the implementation of the enrollment cap, the State has made Milwaukee County's most vulnerable citizens wait for long-term care services. As a member of the Commission on Aging, I can report that the Aging Resource Center of Milwaukee County has wait-listed more than 600

people for long-term care services because of the enrollment cap. The growth of this waiting list reverses a decade long trend in Milwaukee County, where there has not been a waiting list for elderly residents since 2002. With the implementation of the enrollment cap, the waiting list for younger persons with disabilities is around 1,500. In Milwaukee County, many of these individuals have been waiting for years.

Today's action by the Senate Committee on Health is a step in the right direction. The Assembly Committee on Aging and Long-Term Care should follow suit and hear Assembly Bill 477, the companion legislation to Senate Bill 380.

The Department of Health Services promises to implement reforms to the Family Care program that will achieve sufficient efficiencies to internally fund the costs associated with lifting the cap. The Department should not be allowed to act unilaterally to implement these reforms without public or legislative oversight.

The appropriate standing committees of both the Senate and the Assembly should exercise their oversight responsibilities to ensure the Family Care benefit is not diminished as a result of the proposed modifications. With the implementation of the reforms, the Department must demonstrate that the safety, health and welfare of our residents will be maintained.

At a minimum, it is critical that the Department hold public hearings in Milwaukee County to solicit feedback on the proposed reforms. The Committee's support of this request for a public hearing in Milwaukee County would be appreciated. For the Committee's review, the initial response from the Milwaukee County Department of Family Care and resources centers to the proposed reforms is attached. The Chairman of the Milwaukee County Board has shared these reports with the Governor and the Secretary as well.

For example, the Department should carefully consider community need as it proposes to increasingly rely on natural supports as a mechanism to achieve cost-savings. About one-third of Milwaukee's population lives in poverty, and these residents may lack a support system that can financially sustain additional responsibilities. Assuming the care of a frail elder or a younger person with disabilities may be more they can handle financially.

In his State of the State address, the Governor touted that the provision of additional funding for Medicaid allowed for the expansion of Family Care...*"all across the State."* Yet, the wait list for long-term care services persists today.

The enrollment cap never should have been instituted in the first place. Individuals on a waiting list for Family Care services deserve immediate placement and their families deserve a fair and consistent outcome. Every day that the State fails to change its course is a day too many.

Our residents remain in need and demand immediate corrective action from you. Therefore, I urge you to lift the enrollment cap on Family Care today.