

Combined Community Services Board



Patrick Linnane – Chair
Cindy Bentley
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Patricia Fabian
Supervisor Sylvia Ortiz-Velez

April 22, 2019

To: Governor Evers, Secretary-Designee Thompson, Sen. Darling, Rep. Nygren,
Rep. Loudenbeck, Sen. Olsen

CC: County Executive Abele, County Board of Supervisors, Mayor Barrett, Common Council,
Director Meyers, Dan Boehm- Managing Director, Milwaukee County Transit Services, Barbara
Beckert- Disability Rights Wisconsin

From: Milwaukee County Combined Community Services Board

RE: Transportation is a Cornerstone in the Community Based Continuum of Care

We are writing to tell you what it is like to rely on public transportation and paratransit services when you have a disability. We believe that you need to understand that transportation is THE ONLY THING between many of us and a nursing home. Without reliable, affordable and accessible transportation we cannot leave our homes for work, medical appointments, family events or social activities.

Many caregivers use public transportation. If we do not live close enough to a bus line, we have more trouble hiring caregivers. Without caregivers, many of us cannot get out of bed which leads to depression and illness. Many of us are restricted by a very low-income. Bus service needs to be maintained near areas where there is a high population of people with disabilities and low incomes. The usage may not be high due to limited mobility, but it is needed to maintain connections to needed services.

Paratransit services will not cross county lines and that is a huge barrier for us. We miss family events like funerals and weddings because they are across a county line and we cannot ride in a car. If our medical providers relocate to an office across a county line, we cannot continue to see them. It is hard to find providers who understand issues related to disabilities.

We like living independently and using community-based services. We need social connections like everyone else. We need to work, get to appointments, go to our community-based activities and see our families. Our friends and families can often not transport us if we are using a wheelchair.

CCSB members and consumers of services consistently report that **insufficient transportation and personal care threaten their ability to live safely and independently in the community**. Without adequate service in these areas, people with disabilities are not ensured a quality of life that we feel is a basic human right. Because of this belief, the CCSB supports the Disability Rights Wisconsin Budget Priorities regarding transportation.

DRW recommends:

- Increase of 10% in transit and specialized transportation funding to counties and tribes and ongoing increases of at least 3.5% to account for the growth over the past five years and accelerating growth in the future.
- Incentivize a regional approach to transportation by creating statutory language allowing counties and municipalities to pool and coordinate existing sources of public and other transportation funding and creating appropriation lines specifically for regional entities pooling funding to create, expand, and maintain public transportation capacity within the region.
- Improved performance measures and oversight for **Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT)** which is an essential service for Medicaid members....Performance measures should be based on service provided and member complaints. DRW recommends that DHS improve the complaint process, and engage the community, Medicaid members and providers, and any other stakeholders to provide input in the NEMT transition; this can include re-invigorating the Transportation Advisory Council.

Thank you for your service and your serious consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Milwaukee County Combined Community Services Board

Transportation Committee: Cynthia Bentley, Lisa Burg, and Luanne McGregor

Note: CCSB is statutorily charged with ensuring that Milwaukee County residents have a comprehensive range of coordinated services to meet needs around alcohol and drug abuse, disabilities, and mental health. The Board is composed of volunteer community members and consumers of services appointed by the County Executive and approved by the County Board.