



Save IRIS
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Save IRIS makes Final Plea to JFC to Pull Changes to Long-term Care from the Budget and to keep IRIS as a Separate Medicaid Waiver Program

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As the Joint Finance Committee prepares to vote on the future of long-term care in Wisconsin, members of Save IRIS will visit legislators again today to plead for changes to long-term care to be removed from the budget, preserving IRIS as a separate self-directed Medicaid waiver program.

Save IRIS members reviewed the Legislative Fiscal Bureau's report regarding long-term care. The report confirms that IRIS participants manage their budgets wisely with a commitment to keeping costs down and IRIS sustainable: "Average monthly Budget = \$2443. Average Monthly Spending = \$2029. Spending as a Percentage of Budget = 83%." The report also explains that full self-direction in IRIS, which includes budget authority and employer authority, is quite different from partial self-direction in Family Care. "I hope that this report clarifies for legislators that full self-direction is impossible under managed care," says Marion Holmberg of Waukesha, the mother of an IRIS participant.

"It worries me that there is no contingency plan if the changes to long-term care go through and then the HMOs fall through," says Nancy Gapinski of Glendale, a parent of a son with autism and a member of Save IRIS. "IRIS, Family Care, Partnership, and the ADRCs serve Wisconsin's most vulnerable citizens- frail elders and adults with developmental and/or physical disabilities whose long-term care needs are consistent with those of nursing home residents. Medicaid Waiver Funding is the funding of last resort; it is the safety net. Having no back-up plan places 55,000 people at great risk of losing supports in their homes and ending up in nursing homes and other costly institutions."

"Since the Governor's budget came out in February, the public outcry to remove changes to long-term care has been steady and strong: hundreds of people testified at public hearings, over 1100 people completed surveys sharing their stories and their plea to preserve IRIS, 4074 people are Save IRIS Facebook followers, there have been nearly 15,000 saveiris.org visits since it launched in February, and over 6000 people signed a petition to save IRIS. The people have spoken. We just hope that the legislators are listening. It is not an exaggeration to say that lives are at stake," says Jason Endres, an IRIS participant from Eau Claire.

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"Save IRIS" is a non-partisan grassroots movement of IRIS participants and their allies dedicated to preserving IRIS- Wisconsin's only long-term care option in which participants completely self-direct their supports and services.