



December 2, 2020

Secretary-Designee Andrea Palm
Wisconsin Department of Health Services
1 W. Wilson Street, Room 650
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Secretary-Designee Andrea Palm,

On behalf of those living with cystic fibrosis (CF) in Wisconsin, we write to you today in regard to Governor Evers's order that the Department of Health Services identify \$30M in cuts to its FY20-21 budget. We ask that the Department protect funding for the Wisconsin Chronic Disease Program (WCDP) and BadgerCare, two programs that remain more important than ever for the CF community.

Cystic fibrosis is a life-threatening genetic disease that affects approximately 700 people in Wisconsin and 30,000 people in the United States. CF causes the body to produce thick, sticky mucus that clogs the lungs and digestive system, which can lead to life-threatening infections. As a complex, multi-system condition, CF requires targeted, specialized treatment and medications. In order to stay healthy, people with CF must be able to get their care at accredited care centers where clinicians use evidence-based guidelines to deliver multi-disciplinary, coordinated care centered on patients' unique needs.

WCDP is a state-run program that helps people living with CF afford the high cost of their care. It houses the Adult Cystic Fibrosis Program (ACF), which helps adults with cystic fibrosis pay for services like prescriptions and doctor's visits when there are gaps left by other forms of insurance. According to a survey of 2,500 people living with CF conducted by George Washington University, 45 percent of people with CF spend \$5,000 or more in out-of-pocket costs for copayments, coinsurance, and noncovered services, demonstrating the importance of funding programs like WCDP to ensure that people with CF have access to the care and treatments they need.

BadgerCare is also a crucial source of coverage for almost 40 percent of children and 20 percent of adults living with CF in Wisconsin. Medicaid plays an important role in helping people with cystic fibrosis afford the specialized care and treatments they need to stay healthy. For many people with cystic fibrosis, BadgerCare fills coverage gaps in private insurance that leave patients with unsustainable out-of-pocket costs.

While we understand that Wisconsin is facing budget constraints as it works to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are concerned that reductions in WCDP funding could potentially disrupt access to care for people with CF, at a time when they need it most. Similarly, cuts to Medicaid will further stress hospitals and providers already in a weakened financial state. Reductions in provider reimbursement, in particular, will have a lasting effect on CF care centers as they are often housed within academic medical centers, which see a disproportionate number of low-income patients. These institutions rely on Medicaid for a large portion of their revenue and are already in financially precarious

positions due to reduced volume in elective procedures. We have heard reports of care centers having to furlough or lay off staff and fear that additional cuts to provider reimbursement could further exacerbate these issues and result in more centers losing critical staff.

We thank you for keeping the needs of people with CF in mind when identifying DHS's FY20-21 budget cuts. While we understand that the Department is considering rightsizing the Wisconsin Chronic Disease Program in the upcoming biennial budget, we ask that you hold funding stable for the remainder of the current fiscal year. By protecting funding for Medicaid and WCDP, you will help ensure people living with CF in Wisconsin who rely on these programs can get the care they need. We appreciate your partnership and hope you will consider the CF Foundation a resource in the weeks and months ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary B. Dwight". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "D".

Mary B. Dwight
Chief Policy & Advocacy Officer
Senior Vice President of Policy and Advocacy

Cc: Lisa Olson, Assistance Deputy Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Health Services