

**For immediate release:**

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Joint Finance Democrats Call for Immediate Removal of Harmful Changes to SeniorCare, IRIS and FamilyCare from State Budget

RICE LAKE – Prior to the Joint Committee on Finance’s (JFC) hearing in Rice Lake, the Democratic members of the JFC called for removal of budget provisions that would dismantle Wisconsin’s successful long-term care system. Governor Walker’s proposal would replace it with a statewide model, likely run by out-of-state corporate insurance companies and without competitive bid requirements for contracts. Following their request for removal of these changes, Representatives Gordon Hintz (D-Oshkosh) and Chris Taylor (D-Madison) released the following statement:

“The Republicans’ dismantling of Wisconsin’s long term care system is throwing Wisconsin families into crisis,” Rep. Taylor said. “Families served by Wisconsin’s long-term care system want to be treated with dignity and respect, and instead feel surprised and sabotaged. But it doesn’t have to be this way. Republicans need to take these changes out of the budget today.”

“Over the last week I have heard from hundreds of families that count on IRIS and FamilyCare for the support they need to be healthy and successful,” Rep. Hintz said. “We are being asked to adopt a plan that has no details other than dismantling our existing long-term care system. More than 50,000 Wisconsin families are served by our long-term care programs fear what this means for their loved ones. This change has no business in the budget, and needs to be removed immediately to avoid any further harm and uncertainty.”

Wisconsin’s current long-term care system has been a national model, based on years of trust, accountability, and work built by local stakeholder input. Currently, IRIS and Family Care allow people with a disability and the elderly to choose the type of in-home health services that best meet their needs, through regional providers or self-directed care. These changes were never discussed before they were introduced in the budget and have been met with strong opposition from families who were blindsided by the proposal. DHS Secretary Rhoades has stated that she was also unaware of the proposal before it was included in the budget.