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## **Disability Rights Wisconsin Concerned Special Session Bills Will Impact People with Disabilities**

Madison, WI- Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) is concerned that many of the special session bills that were passed yesterday in the State Assembly will lead to the loss of crucial benefits that help people with disabilities and their caregivers who are living in poverty. Adults with disabilities already make up a disproportionate share of those living in poverty. Many Wisconsinites with disabilities access public benefits, including individuals with mental illness, cognitive disabilities, and chronic disabling conditions. These bills, by implementing further barriers to accessing benefits, will only lead to a reduction in benefits and an increase in poverty for our most vulnerable citizens across the state.

While many bills are written to apply only to “able-bodied adults” and provide exemptions for people with disabilities, people with disabilities may have difficulties demonstrating an exemption, especially where there are not consistent exemptions for people with disabilities across benefits. “People with disabilities access a number of programs, such as public housing, Medicaid, and FoodShare, and with the added burden of complying with numerous and varying requirements for different programs, people with disabilities are likely to lose access to benefits,” stated Amy Devine, Public Policy Coordinator.

DRW supports the new exemption language from the work requirements in FoodShare for people who are caring for dependent children with disabilities; however, exemptions for caregivers are not consistent across bills and given that many people with disabilities rely upon family members for their caregiving needs, these requirements may also cause caregivers to fall through the cracks. “Clear and consistent exemptions for people with disabilities and chronic conditions that make work difficult and exemptions for their caregivers are crucial to support those living in poverty,” said Daniel Idzikowski, Executive Director. “Most importantly, these bills will not provide additional supports for Wisconsinites to enter the workforce. Rather, they will have the opposite effect – increasing disparities and driving families further into poverty when the limited supports they do receive, including basic health coverage, are removed.”

*Disability Rights Wisconsin is the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy system for the State of Wisconsin.*

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