



August 7, 2020

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

Electronically sent to: andrea.palm@dhs.wisconsin.gov ; Cc lisaa.olson@dhs.wisconsin.gov

Dear Secretary-Designee Andrea Palm,

On behalf of those living with cystic fibrosis (CF) in Wisconsin, we thank you for all that you and the State of Wisconsin are doing to ensure the health and safety of state residents in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we understand that these are unprecedented times, we ask for your continued support of adequate funding for CF-related programs like the Wisconsin Chronic Disease Program and BadgerCare in the Department's request for the 2021 – 2023 biennial budget.

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.

The Wisconsin Chronic Disease Program (WCDP) helps people living with CF afford the high cost of their care. WCDP is a payer of last resort that 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. In a 2017 study, researchers found that 45 percent of people with CF surveyed spent \$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 patients with serious and chronic health care needs, including 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. As the agency works on its budget request, we ask that you keep the needs of the CF community in mind and adequately fund Medicaid.

We understand that Wisconsin is facing budget constraints as it works to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we are concerned that reductions in WCDP or Medicaid funding could

potentially disrupt access to care for people with CF at a time when they need it most. Further, we believe that now, more than ever, it is important for the state to expand eligibility for the BadgerCare program to cover childless adults with incomes less than 138 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL). By expanding Medicaid, Wisconsin would be able to draw down much-needed federal dollars and strengthen a vital safety net for the state's most vulnerable residents, including those with cystic fibrosis.

Thank you for your attention to this issue and for keeping the needs of people with CF in mind when forming DHS's 2021 – 2023 budget request. We look forward to working with the state of Wisconsin to improve the lives of all people with cystic fibrosis. Please consider us a resource moving forward.

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 a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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