

Public Input Needed On State's FamilyCare and IRIS Programs

Written by Joint Finance Committee Democrats
Thursday, 18 February 2016 09:39 -



Only two, two-hour hearings on the DHHS plans will be held on March 7th, and they will take place on the same day in two different regions of the state, Eau Claire and Madison.

MADISON - The Democratic members of the Joint Committee on Finance are encouraging participants and advocates for Wisconsin's long term care system to attend the March 7th public hearings on the concept plan to restructure the state's FamilyCare and IRIS programs.

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) recently announced the only two, two-hour hearings on the concept plan will be held, and that they will take place on the same day in two different regions of the state. It is important to note that the DHS has announced that no further public comment, written or otherwise, will be taken outside of these two brief events.

"Once again the DHS will be unveiling a plan that had little to no stakeholder input which is why stakeholders felt it necessary to come up with their own plan. I hope DHS will closely examine the stakeholders' plan and will incorporate their suggestions which were built from concerned consensus," said Senator **Jon Erpenbach** (D-Middleton).

"The 50,000+ Wisconsin families served by our long-term care programs are concerned about what this means for their loved ones," said Rep. **Gordon Hintz** (D-Oshkosh), "The DHS should be appreciative that so many participants are attempting to be active part of the comment process and share their valuable experiences and feedback. The fact that the DHS has instead chosen to limit public testimony to only those that can attend a hearing in either Eau Claire or Madison in the span of one day is deeply troubling, and seems to confirm the concerns that the changes our successful long term care system are nothing but a giveaway to out-of-state insurance companies."



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"How many public hearings does DHS need to hold until they understand that the long-term community does not want changes to Family Care and IRIS? At every single public hearing I have attended on this issue the message is clear – do not change our long-term care program. DHS and Governor Walker must have ear plugs in during these public hearings, because no matter how many times they are told to keep services and providers the same, they continue to push these unnecessary and unwanted reforms on Wisconsin's most vulnerable citizens," said Rep. **Chris Taylor** (D-Madison).

"No written testimony? What about the right to petition your government? Governor Walker and his administration are violating the people's rights while the GOP changing policies that will impact thousands of Wisconsinites," said Sen. **Lena Taylor** (D-Milwaukee).

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. Changes to long term care in Wisconsin became the focus of the 2015-2017 budget because of an abrupt proposal by Governor Walker's administration to overhaul the system, despite its popularity.

The unveiling of the concept plan will be the first opportunity for individuals and families who depend on the current system to view plans for its overhaul. In an attempt to provide further information and feedback during this process, a coalition of advocates and stakeholder groups has prepared a recommended plan for moving forward. The stakeholder plan can be viewed online: www.wilongtermcarecoalition.org/stakeholders-blueprint

From DHS: The Department of Health and Human Services will hold public hearings to solicit comment regarding the concept plan that will be submitted to the Joint Committee on Finance on April 1, 2016. A draft of the concept plan will be published on the Family Care/IRIS 2.0 webpage the first week of March. The hearings will be live streamed so anyone with access to the web may participate. Free parking will be available at both events.

Please note: Due to the limited time to make revisions before submission of the concept plan, and extensive public comments received previously, the Department will not accept written or verbal testimony before or after the hearings.

Eau Claire Public Hearing

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March 7, 2016 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.
Florian Gardens Conference Center
2340 Lorch Avenue
Eau Claire, WI 54701

[Join Eau Claire Public Hearing via webcast](#)

Madison Public Hearing

March 7, 2016 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.
Alliant Energy Center Exhibition Hall
1919 Alliant Energy Center Way
Madison, WI 53713

[Join Madison Public Hearing via webcast](#)