



County Of Dane
Office Of The County Executive

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Restore Money for Dementia Care in State Budget

A Column by Dane County Executive Joe Parisi

Wisconsin's changing demographics have already begun to stress our support networks for those dealing with the effects of aging. Our largest generation – the Baby Boomers – have started to retire and enroll in Social Security. Within ten years our population of those who are retired and elderly will be exponentially higher than today.

Along with an aging population comes an increase in age-related ailments including the onset of dementia. In Dane County more than 7,000 people live with dementia and all of them need and deserve support so that they can live fulfilling and independent lives. Without proper support, those with dementia may fall victim to abuse or neglect or may physically jeopardize their own wellbeing. No dementia patient or their families should ever have to live with that fear.

At the forefront of Dane County's efforts to assist those with dementia is the vital work done by our Dementia Care Specialist, a state grant funded employee who has provided those in need with a link to a support network since 2014. In addition to being a point for referrals, our specialist also worked with 16 communities and helped 232 businesses and organizations to become certified as Dementia Friendly.

Governor Walker's 2017-2019 state budget eliminates funding for Dementia Care Specialists. Without these dollars, Dane and other counties, will not be able to continue these services. As a former member of the Wisconsin Assembly I am very familiar with the state budget process. As Dane County Executive I also understand that budgets are blueprints of priorities. Our seniors and most vulnerable citizens should be made a priority by state government.

Our Dementia Care Specialist operates out of Dane County's Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), our comprehensive one-stop-shop for information and referrals for those in need of supports and their families. The ADRC is also supported primarily by state dollars, making the elimination of help for those with dementia both disappointing and confusing.

I am calling on the Governor and the Legislature to maintain funding for the Dementia Care Specialists and urge you to reach out with your calls and letters to do the same. We all owe it to our family, friends and neighbors who are struggling with the impact of dementia to ensure that help is available.

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