



## **Talking Points on Governor's 2019-21 Budget Proposal**

### **Child Welfare Funding**

The county child welfare system is in a state of crisis. Due primarily to the meth and opioid epidemic, counties are struggling with unprecedented caseload growth. From 2012 through March 2018, counties experienced a 39% increase in out-of-home care placements.

In addition, during a similar time period, the average amount of time a child stayed in out-of-home care increased 127% from 157 days to 356 days. While counties have increased property tax support for child welfare by nearly 40%, it is not sufficient to provide adequate service and acceptable caseloads for county social workers.

Governor Evers' budget increases funding for county child welfare services by \$15 million annually. WCA requests the legislature provide an additional \$15 million annually for child welfare above the Governor's budget. This would result in an additional \$30 million annually for county child welfare services.

[Click here to view WCA's issue paper on child welfare funding.](#)

### **911 Funding**

Last budget, the state approved nearly \$7 million for the creation of a state-hosted emergency service IP network (ESInet). This statewide digital network is the most cost-effective solution to aid Wisconsin in transitioning from the obsolete analog hardware and software used today to the Next Generation 911 (NG911) digital system currently being used around the country.

Once the ESInet is operational, local 911 centers will require new NG911 capable equipment to connect to the digital system.

WCA requests \$7 million from the Police and Fire Protection Fund in each year of the biennium for a competitive grant program to support counties in purchasing NG911 equipment. The grant program would be ongoing and could be utilized for equipment upgrades and maintenance.

[Click here to view WCA's issue paper on 911 funding.](#)

### **17-Year-Old Juvenile Offenders**

The Governor's budget reverts jurisdiction of 17-year-olds from adult court to juvenile court for acts committed on or after January 1, 2021 and provides sum sufficient funding to Wisconsin counties to cover eligible costs associated with returning these youth to the juvenile justice

system. The sum-sufficient appropriation will start with a base of \$5 million GPR in FY21 and will be used to reimburse counties for the increased costs associated with raising the age. Under the Governor's budget, expenses eligible for reimbursement will be determined by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) in consultation with representatives of the counties. The change applies to violations under the criminal code, as well as violations of civil law or municipal ordinances.

WCA requests the legislature adopt the Governor's policy change and his proposed sum sufficient appropriation to reimburse counties for services provided to 17-year-olds in the juvenile justice system; one cannot occur without the other.

[\*Click here to view WCA's issue paper on 17-year-old juveniles.\*](#)

### **Court Appointed Attorney Compensation Rate**

In May 2018, the Wisconsin Supreme Court held a public hearing on Supreme Court Rule Petition 17-06. The Supreme Court approved a portion of the petition and raised the court appointed attorney rate to \$100 per hour beginning January 2020. This increase will be financially devastating for cash-strapped counties struggling to provide state-mandated services in an era of growing demands and reduced revenues.

Counties are responsible for providing—and paying for—legal counsel for many individuals. This includes Guardian ad Litem (GAL), DEAN appointments—individuals who do not qualify for a state public defender (SPD) but are unable to afford legal representation—and when the SPD cannot find representation for their client. Counties will be required by Supreme Court rule to pay \$100 per hour (currently \$70 per hour) for court appointed attorneys, even in cases where an individual qualifies for state representation.

WCA requests \$10 million over the biennium to compensate for the increased cost to counties for court appointed attorneys.

[\*Click here to view WCA's issue paper on county appointed attorneys.\*](#)

### **Transportation Funding**

Transportation has long been one of the most critical challenges facing both the State of Wisconsin and local governments. The Governor's budget includes new revenues to place the segregated transportation fund on a sustainable funding path. In addition, the Governor's budget includes additional funding to critical county programs, including general transportation aids.

WCA requests the legislature approve the Governor's transportation proposal and continue to prioritize county transportation investments.

### **Local Property Taxes**

Wisconsin counties primarily fund state mandates and local services through the property tax. However, due to state property tax controls, counties have been unable to generate the revenue

growth needed to even keep pace with inflation. This has resulted in significant service cuts and increased reliance on borrowing to fund state mandates. The Governor's budget places a 2% levy limit on counties.

WCA requests the legislature adopt the Governor's proposed changes to county levy limits, thereby ensuring local governments have the resources necessary to deliver state mandates while also minimizing increases in local property tax bills.

###