The 2017-19 budget, 2017 Wisconsin Act 59, calls for total expenditures of nearly $76 billion over the biennium. The following summarizes issues of greatest interest to the WCC.

**Children and Family Aids.** Increases aid to families by $5 million annually starting in 2018; increases foster care rates; and eliminates the “fiscal cliff” by allowing families participating in Wisconsin Shares with incomes above 200 percent of federal poverty level (FPL) to continue receiving subsidies with graduated copayments.

**FSET Extension.** Beginning in April 2019, extends FoodShare Employment and Training (FSET) requirements to able-bodied adults with school-age children if not working 80 hours per month.

**FoodShare Asset Test.** Recommends implementing a FoodShare eligibility $25,000 household liquid asset test for individuals who are not elderly, blind, or have a disability.

**Supporting Parents Supporting Kids.** Expands to five counties the existing demonstration program to provide work supports for low-income noncustodial parents who are unable to pay child support due to unemployment or underemployment.

**Elderly and Disabled Transportation Aids.** Provides a two-percent increase in each year of the biennium for county seniors and individuals with disabilities transportation aid.

**Expanded Drug Testing.** Expands drug screening, testing, and treatment to new W-2 participants.

**Homestead Tax Credit.** Alters eligibility rules causing 11,400 households to lose $7 million in credits during the second year of the budget period (an average of $614 per household), and ends eligibility for those who have no earned income.

**Transitional Jobs.** Increases by $1 million each year the Transitional Jobs initiative for four rural counties.

**Fast Forward.** Instructs the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) to broaden the field of possible grant recipients under the workforce training grant program, Fast Forward.

**Homeless Employment.** Creates a homelessness employment program with a goal of transitioning participants into permanent employment. A municipality would receive $75,000 in each year of the biennium, with a $50,000 matching grant requirement, to pilot the program.

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Director’s Corner
Kim Wadas, Executive Director

As WCC staff, we have the privilege of meeting with those who manage and operate Wisconsin’s Catholic Charities agencies. Though these organizations serve their community in various ways around the state, there is a uniform plea among all charitable providers — the need for more mental health professionals and greater access to mental health services.

The recently passed state budget act addresses some of these shortages. It adds $500,000 for the child psychiatry consultation program, which allows primary care providers to consult with mental health professionals who have experience counseling children. It provides $6.5 million over the next two years to improve and expand school mental health services, including allowing private schools that participate in the parental choice programs to receive partial reimbursement for school social workers. It provides $1 million annually to provide treatment services to sex-trafficked children.

The budget also provides funding for mental health and alcohol and other drug abuse (AODA) treatments for the incarcerated. It increases expenditures for new psychological staff within several Department of Corrections facilities, as well as the number of residential treatment beds for inmates with significant mental health issues.

The budget also creates a five-year offender reentry demonstration project that incorporates a trauma-informed approach with traditional reentry programming. The program targets formerly incarcerated fathers who are returning to live in the City of Milwaukee.

In terms of health services, the budget changes Medicaid rules, which will hopefully soon allow for coverage of services in an institution for mental disease for those who are age 21 through 64. However, this provision is conditioned on federal financial participation. Finally, the budget provides Medicaid reimbursement for clinical mental health consultations for students under age 21. While there remains a wealth of individuals in need of mental health assistance, especially in our state’s rural areas, this budget represents a step in the right direction.

Wisconsin Bishops on DACA

The Catholic Bishops of Wisconsin last month issued the following statement in response to the Administration’s announced termination of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in March 2018:

“The bishops of Wisconsin affirm their support for the continued protection of youth under the federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. Most of the nearly 8,000 DACA Wisconsinites, who are among almost 800,000 DACA young adults nationwide, know no other home than the U.S., having been brought here in their youth through no choice of their own. The DACA program allows these individuals to seek employment and education without fear of being forced to leave their family and home. DACA young adults are students in our schools and universities, leaders in our parishes, veterans of our military, and participants in our economy.

People of goodwill can disagree on whether it was prudent to institute the DACA policy. However, over the past five years, these young individuals have participated in the program and relied upon assurances provided by our nation’s government that they could live in security and would be treated with fairness.

We urge Members of Congress to find a legislative solution that protects DACA youth. We also urgently ask that Congress and President Donald Trump commit themselves to achieving permanent and comprehensive immigration reform. We affirm those of our lawmakers who have already expressed their desire to do so, and offer every encouragement to lawmakers of both parties to find a way forward in forging immigration policy that puts aside partisanship for the sake of the common good.

To our DACA youth, we want you to know that we admire your courage, tenacity, and commitment. We are grateful for all that you do for your families, churches, communities, and for this nation. We join our voices with yours and accompany you in these difficult times.”

The statement is also available on the Wisconsin Catholic Conference website, wisconsincatholic.org.
**WCC Budget Summary, Continued from page 1**

**JCI Rates.** Increases daily rates, currently at $292, for juvenile correctional institutions (JCI) to $344 in 2018-19 and $352 in 2019-20. There is also a $6 per day add-on to the daily rate for juvenile correctional facilities. Allows the Department of Corrections (DOC) to place individuals under the age of 18, who are sentenced in adult court, in the JCIs.

**Earned Release Program Expansion.** Expands the earned release program at DOC correctional centers.

**TAD.** Provides $2 million in one-time funds annually for expansion of the Treatment Alternatives and Diversion (TAD) program and creates $250,000 annually in grant funding for similar programs within counties.

**Employment Opportunities.** Provides $330,400 annually to expand the Opening Avenues to Reentry Success (OARS) programs.

**Public School Per Pupil Aid.** Increases public school per-pupil aid to $450 in 2017-18 and $654 in 2018-19, resulting in $505 million in additional aid. The aid amount for future fiscal years is set at $630 per year.

**Parental Choice Program Funding.** Increases funding for the Milwaukee, Racine, and statewide parental choice programs (MPCP, RCPCP, and WPCP) to reflect general per pupil payment increases of $207 in 2017-18.

**WPCP Income Limit.** Increases the WPCP income limit from 185 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) to 220 percent of the FPL ($60,460 for a married couple with two children). Returning program students do not need to provide income verification when applying to a new parental choice program. Students who were on wait list previously due to a district cap restriction are eligible to apply.

**Special Needs Scholarship.** Removes program eligibility requirements tied to prior public school attendance or an open enrollment denial. Beginning in 2018-19, a private school can spend up to 150 percent of the voucher amount, if it submits a financial statement of costs to the DPI. Provides summer school funding beginning in 2018.

**Transportation Aid.** Provides 100 percent reimbursement for rural school districts that generate High Cost Transportation Aid and increases pupil transportation reimbursement rates.

**Family Care Funding.** Provides $25 million over the biennium and directs the Department of Health Services (DHS) to work with Family Care managed care organizations to develop an allowable payment mechanism to increase the direct care and services portion of the capitation rates. This would trigger over $24 million in federal matching funds.

**Employment and Training for Childless Adults.** Recommends requiring that childless adult Medicaid recipients participate in job training and employment assistance services, affecting 49,200 adults.

**MAPP.** Strengthens work requirements for people with disabilities who are enrolled in the Medicaid Purchase Plan (MAPP) program by requiring proof of paid employment, substantial in-kind work, or participation in pre-employment programming and in-kind work.

**Home Visiting.** Provides an additional $3.9 million for the Family Foundations Home Visiting (FFHV) program, which seeks to prevent child injuries, abuse, neglect, and maltreatment.

**Children’s Long-Term Supports.** Provides $14,067,300 in 2017-18 and $25,205,500 in 2018-19 to eliminate the waiting list for long-term supports for approximately 2,200 children with disabilities.

**Nursing Home Rates.** Increases nursing home reimbursement rates by 2 percent each year.

**Personal Care.** Provides a 2 percent annual increase in the personal care provider rate.

**Audits of Family Planning Services Provided through Certain Providers.** Requires the DHS Office of the Inspector General to conduct an audit of all family planning service reimbursements paid to covered entities under the MA program.

**Disproportionate Share Hospital Payments and Rural Critical Care Supplements.** Increases payments for disproportionate share hospitals by about $30 million per year and includes facilities that would be eligible to receive funds, but for the lack of obstetric services.
Heal Without Harm Coalition on WisconsinEye

On September 25, the public affairs network, WisconsinEye, interviewed the four founding members of the Heal Without Harm (HWH) Coalition, including WCC Executive Director, Kim Wadas, on its new legislative initiative. Since its formation in 2015, the Coalition has been advocating for the ethical use of fetal body parts in Wisconsin’s research communities.

The Coalition members explained that the Heal Without Harm Initiative is a package of two complementary bills, authored by Senator Terry Moulton (R-Chippewa Falls) and Rep. Joel Kleefisch (R-Oconomowoc), which seeks to advance scientific research and demonstrate respect for unborn children.

Currently, some research at both public and private labs around the state utilizes fetal tissue derived from aborted children. This has caused ethical dilemmas for researchers who do not want to experiment on this type of tissue. It has also disturbed many members of the public who do not want to receive medicines and treatments that are derived from the unjust taking of human life.

The Fetal Remains Respect Act (Senate Bill 423/Assembly Bill 549) prohibits any person from knowingly acquiring, providing, receiving, or using fetal body parts obtained from induced abortions (i.e., where the child is directly and deliberately killed). The Act also requires a facility that provides an abortion to arrange for the final disposition of the aborted remains.

The Unborn Child Disposition and Anatomical Gift Act (Senate Bill 424/Assembly Bill 550) requires that in every instance of an unborn child’s death due to stillbirth or miscarriage (i.e., where the child dies naturally or accidentally) within a facility, the facility shall inform the mother that she may request her child’s remains either for final disposition and/or to make an anatomical gift for research, experimentation, study, or transplantation. This unique approach will ensure that scientists will have an ample supply of ethically-derived fetal tissue in the future and therefore end the demand for abortion-derived tissue.

Neither proposal includes imprisonment for lawbreakers. Fines will only be levied on entities, such as clinics and research facilities, not on individuals.

To learn more and to view the WisconsinEye interview, visit the Coalition’s website at healwithoutharm.org.