

June 3, 2010

Dear Honorable

I am writing to you regarding the 2010-2011 State Budget for Community Mental Retardation, Community Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Services.

The Governor's budget includes a proposed \$17 million reduction in state and federal funding for existing community-based services to people with intellectual disabilities. While this proposed cut saves \$6.1 million in state funds, it sends over \$11 million in federal matching funds back to Washington – monies that are now being used here in Pennsylvania to finance existing community-based services. This failure to protect people with intellectual disabilities is entirely unnecessary, given the \$388 million recommended increase in the budget for the Department of Public Welfare and the \$1.15 billion recommended increase in the state's General Fund budget.

Notably, the community-based organizations that provide community mental health, drug and alcohol, and mental retardation services face ever-increasing costs such as health insurance, liability insurance, transportation and heating fuel. Over the past 15 years, the value of state funding for these services has actually declined by over 40%. For the third year in a row, the Governor's budget does not include any increased funding to offset these mandated cost increases. Our \$5 billion system of human services must rely heavily on dedicated staff who care for the people they serve but who cannot maintain the purchasing power of the wages they need to support their own families.

We believe, during difficult economic times, state government must use its limited resources to meet its core responsibilities to its most vulnerable citizens. These individuals, their families and the services that support them, are among the least able to bear the impact of cuts in order to balance Pennsylvania's budget.

Therefore, on behalf of these individuals and their families, The Family Services Board of Directors asks that you consider the following:

Maintain existing services to people with intellectual disabilities:

a. **Restore the \$6 million** in state funds needed to maintain funding for existing services in the Community MR Waiver appropriation;

b. Support the Governor's request for **\$12 million** in state funds needed to maintain existing levels of service in the Community MR Base Appropriation. Existing services are being financed this fiscal year through \$12 million in one-time monies left over from the previous years.

Protect Vulnerable People with Intellectual Disabilities:

a. **Support** the Governor’s request for **\$2 million** in state funds for extended community services needed to avoid the much higher cost of placing people with intellectual disabilities in state institutions;

b. **Provide \$850,000** in state funds to provide day services to 400 special education high school graduates needed to maintain the skills and capabilities developed during over twenty years of publicly-funded early intervention and special education;

c. **Provide \$5.1 million** in state funds to meet the needs of the 389 sons and daughters of aging parents on the Emergency Waiting List for community mental retardation services;

d. **Provide \$1.3 million** in state funds to maintain services for 72 people who will age out of existing residential and in-home services needed to allow them to remain in their communities.

Continue the development of services to adults with autism:

a. **Support** the Governor’s request of \$18.6 million in state funds for DPW’s Autism Intervention and Services appropriation that, while slightly lower than this year’s funding, supports the continued phase-in of these services;

Support the development of community mental health services through the transfer to the community of 155 current residents of state mental hospitals.

Maintain existing funding for drug and alcohol services:

a. **Support** the Governor’s request for level funding (\$41.75 million) for Drug and Alcohol Programs in the Department of Health.

The Emergency Waiting List for People with Mental Retardation will grow significantly next year as a result of the Governor’s failure to propose an even minimally adequate initiative to meet the urgent needs of thousands of Pennsylvanians whose families are no longer able to provide that care. Please consider these issues when voting.

Regards:

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