



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Cecilia Tkaczyk

Tkaczyk, Parents and Advocates: Restore Funds for People with Developmental Disabilities

CECILIA TKACZYK March 11, 2013

| ISSUE: **DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**



(**Rotterdam, NY**) State Senator Cecilia Tkaczyk, Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara, advocates, parents and service providers today called for additional funds to be included in the State budget to assist New Yorkers with developmental disabilities. Under current budget proposals, significant cuts would be made to these critical services.

The cuts, proposed in the budget of the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) total \$120 million, but would also trigger a \$120 million reduction in Federal aid. Funding for voluntary, not-for-profit service providers would be reduced by approximately six percent. These agencies offer medical and clinical services, help developmentally disabled individuals find employment and live independently, and also provide support to families caring for disabled loved ones.

The legislators met with people with developmental disabilities, their parents, and advocates at Schenectady ARC's Maple Ridge Center, which provides a wide variety of services, including support for older individuals with Alzheimers and memory loss issues.

The budget reductions were made after the Federal government announced severe cuts to New York's Medicaid reimbursement rate because of \$15 billion in overpayments made to the State over the past 20 years.

Senator Tkaczyk said, "I think it is outrageous that the Federal government would cut New York's Medicaid reimbursement rate because of past overpayments that were actually approved by the Federal Government. This has placed Governor Cuomo in the very difficult position of having to cut millions of dollars from his Executive Budget. I look forward to working with legislative leaders and the Governor to find a way to absorb the Federal cuts without negatively impacting agencies and programs that serve the most vulnerable members of our community."

Senator Tkaczyk said not-for-profit service providers in the five counties she represents – Albany, Greene, Montgomery, Schenectady and Ulster – serve more than 4,400 individuals with a wide array of disabilities, including Cerebral Palsy, Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorders, intellectual disabilities and other conditions. Agencies in her district stand to lose more than \$11.5 million in funding if the cuts are not reversed.

Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara, said, “If funds aren’t restored, organizations like the Liberty and Schenectady ARCs will see their budgets cut and programs such as day services, residential and family support will be at risk. It will also limit opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to play an active role in their communities – participating in community gardens and volunteering with local groups, allowing them to prosper and feel like the valuable members of our community they are.”

Kirk Lewis, Executive Director of Schenectady ARC, said, "The proposed six percent cut will be devastating to Schenectady ARC and the families and people who depend on us for support. For Schenectady, the cut amounts to a loss of approximately \$1.6 million in revenue. As a not-for-profit organization that has invested any increases we received in the past in supporting its employees, particularly its direct support professionals, we were barely breaking even before the proposed cuts. We cannot absorb a cut of that magnitude without cutting a significant number of positions. Those positions are people who live in our communities and who help the people we support live quality lives in our communities."

Susan Constantino, President & CEO of Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State said, "A six percent cut to services and supports for people with disabilities will decrease their access to services, jeopardize the independence that they have achieved within their communities, may diminish the supports afforded to families and result in a loss of jobs by New Yorkers across the State. It is all New Yorkers’ responsibility to ensure that the people we support receive the respect and opportunities we all deserve; this cut fails to achieve that and is unacceptable.”

Barbara Kania, parent of a child with developmental disabilities, said “Our son Jay is a total care individual and these cuts will impact the care that is necessary for him. Right now he is in a safe place and has the care he needs from staff that he trusts. He needs help with every aspect of life. We need his care and these services preserved for the future when we are not

here to advocate. All he has known is Schenectady ARC and the services they provide and he is happy where he is in life. The stability in his life is imperative to his safety, we just can't afford these cuts. It will place our Jay at risk."

Mary Ann Allen, parent of a son on the Autism Spectrum and Executive Director of Wildwood, said, "The only viable options available to agencies like Wildwood Programs to absorb a cut of this magnitude are through personnel layoffs and the reduction of essential services. More than 1,500 people count on us every day for support and the only way we can deliver on our promise to them is through people--our dedicated, caring staff. Without these employees, and the support and stability they offer to individuals living with the challenges of developmental disabilities, the health and safety of the people we support will be in jeopardy, their families will be impacted and our entire community will be weakened. This battle is about the right of 120,000 New York citizens, including my son, to live safely, productively and with dignity. We cannot back down from that commitment, and therefore we need to find a better way to address the issues that are driving this proposed cut to the voluntary non-profit providers."