

Sent: Thursday, June 25, 2009 2:02 PM
To: Archbishop Chaput
Subject: A request

To: His Excellency, Archbishop Chaput, Archdiocese of Denver Colorado.

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you in order to appeal to you for help in asking the State of Colorado to re-examine the way it is treating the severely developmentally disabled in this current time of crisis.

My son Sean is 29 years old. He lives at home with his mother and I. He was born with Congenital Rubella Syndrome, he contracted German Measles during the first trimester of the pregnancy and this resulted in his being born deaf-blind with developmental disabilities and a seizure disorder.

While it is, indeed, a supreme challenge to deal with the issues surrounding a disability of this kind it has always been my wife and I's intention to keep Sean at home for as long as is possible and up until now we have done exactly that.

For the last ten years or so Sean has had his funding and support via Denver Options as a part of the Supported Living Services waiver . The funding has enabled us to put in place a long term daily care giver who takes Sean each week day for swimming, walking and social interaction, they have been a team for over 8 years.

Sean's care giver, whose name is Doc Davis, is not only a caregiver he is a friend for Sean.

Now the State of Colorado via the Division of Developmental Disabilities has initiated a major restructuring of the way funds are handled for the disabled. This has resulted in a drop of 54% in the funding for Sean's activities.

This division and this restructuring has been done with NO consultation with us, very little advance notice (6 weeks) and has thrown our lives into chaos.

My wife and I are in our mid fifties, I have a fairly good job and my wife is a home maker because one of us has to be available all the time to take care of Sean should he be sick or if his caregiver is off for some reason. Sean can be up for long periods during the night requiring either my wife and I to be up with him which can swiftly lead to exhaustion on our end.

Sean requires a large amount of physical activity per day to use up his energy otherwise he is up during the night. He also requires the exercise to keep his weight down – after 5 years we have succeeded in getting his weight down to the ideal weight for his height. I do not think that the cuts that are being made are being made with the consequences in mind. If his exercise is cut down he will become restless and upset, he will eat more and gain weight back, 10 years of progress will vanish.

It is not that we expect the recession and the economic crisis to leave us unscathed, I am prepared to make adjustments but I would like for us, and the state, to actually work TOGETHER. I would like to be consulted, we would like to have input and perhaps get help in other areas. As an example – I could alter the Dependent Care set-aside from my pay so that we would have some more funds that we could

direct toward care for Sean. With some forethought maybe I could change my schedule and meet up with Doc and Sean at the pool when I finish work and take over from Doc so even if Doc is doing less hours, Sean would get the same amount of exercise.

Your Excellency, the Church has always stood as a voice for the voiceless and as an institution that teaches compassion for those in in need or those who cannot care for themselves.

If I may ask your help to perhaps write to our Governor and urge him to consult with us, the families of those most affected by this sweeping change, we would be very grateful.

Yours sincerely,

Michael and Nancy Wenlock
Byers, Colorado

Response:

Dear Nancy and Michael,

The archbishop is on his way to Rome for meetings, but he asked me to respond in his stead so you'd have a prompt reply. Just FYI, my wife Suann and I -- both of us are 60 -- have an 18 year old son with Down syndrome, and two grand-daughters with disabilities, so we are very familiar with the merit of your concerns. In terms of funding, Colorado is one of the least "friendly" states toward people with special needs.

The archbishop has just drafted a major talk/article on the needs of persons with disabilities and will be revising it over the next couple of weeks. It's an issue that interests him for the coming year. Why don't you give me a call in the afternoon tomorrow, and we can chat about ways he might be able to help? Obviously, he has many demands on his time, but this is clearly an important justice and human dignity issue. My office number is 303.715.3185.

With best wishes,
Francis X. Maier/ chancellor