

Subject: FUNDING CUTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Date: Thursday, June 18, 2009, 4:07 PM

Dear Ms Ciambelli,

Your name was given to us as the Chair of the Government Affairs & Public Policy Committee (GAP). We are hoping you are the correct person for us to be contacting and if not then perhaps you could refer us to the right place/person.

We have just recently learned that funds are being cut in Colorado for the Developmentally Disabled. Reference: <http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/ddd/WhatsNew.htm>. The links therein indicate that funding for organizations such as Denver Options are being slashed by about half (effective July 1, 2009), which obviously seriously impacts the lives of the recipients of their efforts in helping families with developmentally disabled members. This drastic step is being implemented with no prior notice to families thereby allowing insufficient time to react.

We are professionally concerned with this issue as nurses, and are personally concerned and involved because we have very dear friends whose son, Sean Wenlock, is developmentally disabled and stands to be severely impacted by these cutbacks. We're writing to you in hopes that this is something that would be of interest for your organization to become involved in since we nurses are advocates for the underserved and vulnerable in society.

Sean Wenlock is 29 years old, in great health but deaf and blind since birth, cannot speak or communicate except with a few signs he makes to indicate his thirst or hunger, and he also has seizure disorder. He requires 24/7 care and attention. He receives care from an independent contractor, working through Denver Options, five days a week, five hours a day. This is what keeps him active and healthy and involved in healthy activities. This also enables the parents to work and manage other aspects of their lives. The cutbacks could cost the family this caregiver who has worked with Sean for eight years maintaining an incredible and trusted relationship. The parents cannot afford to make up the shortfall created by these new measures. Please refer to <http://theseanproject.blogspot.com> for specifics on Sean.

This situation may have been created by a blanket cutting of costs across the boards, but without adequate forethought it is inhumane as applied to this area. We are certain that the state of Colorado could find other areas where they can make cuts that would not be as destructive as cutting funding for the developmentally disabled. We feel his story would make the impact of these cuts more real to people and if we can get his story out we might be able to enlist enough support to overturn the funding cuts to the developmentally disabled in general in Colorado.

Any help you or GAP could give to this matter would be appreciated by two very grateful nurses, by Sean and by his parents, and potentially by all others so affected in your state. Again, if we should be contacting someone else you would advise, please let us know.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,

Paulette Mahurin, R.N. FNP  
Holly Carlson, R.N.

From: Mary Ciambelli <[drmaryc@msn.com](mailto:drmaryc@msn.com)>  
Subject: RE: FUNDING CUTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED  
Date: Sunday, June 21, 2009, 9:42 AM

Dear Paulette and Holly,

I think I am the right person to send this information to at this time. Our next GAPP meeting will be held on July 8th at CNA Headquarters.

As a psychiatric clinical nurse specialist I am aware of the limited resources in Colorado for those with developmental disabilities and their families and am aware that resources for the developmentally disabled in Colorado are limited. I am also aware that many deep spending cuts were made this year by the legislature to reflect decreased state tax revenues since Colorado's constitution does not allow us to provide deficit spending. I am not sure when Denver Options was notified of the level of cuts made to their program, but I suspect they have known this since the end of the legislative session which was the first week in May. I know that the funding has also been cut to mental health centers and to the state hospitals that provide psychiatric services for persons with mental illness and substance abuse diagnoses. I believe you are correct that funding was cut across the board to all services provided by the state of Colorado which would include services to the developmentally disabled.

I will need to take time to investigate this situation and will then contact the other members of GAPP via e-mail to get their input about how best to address this situation. In the interim, I would encourage your friends and colleagues to contact their personal legislators, the governor's office, local newspapers and other media sources to express their concerns about funding cuts for the developmentally disabled and how this will affect the health and safety of themselves and their family members.

Sincerely,  
Mary Ciambelli, PMHCNS-BC, Ph.D.  
GAPP Chairperson 2010 Legislative Session  
phone 303 229 9959 (cell)