

November 2009

The Honorable David A. Paterson  
State of New York - Executive Chamber  
State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Paterson,

I am writing as a supporter of Westchester Arc in response to your “deficit reduction plan” which will have a disastrous impact on the lives of people with developmental disabilities in New York State. It is clear that New York State is in difficult times and the fiscal picture is dire. However, balancing the solution to this situation on OMRDD programs that have twenty four hour supervisory responsibilities to provide for the safety and health of individuals in our community is not a real solution.

A 10% cut in budgets that support vulnerable people is not the answer. Solutions to the fiscal crisis must balance priorities based on the risks to safety and health and real constitutional responsibilities of government. A cut with a 10% impact will create situations in which people will not be properly supervised, health and safety will be secondary and New York State will violate its legal-constitutional obligations. People will suffer in the most significant ways, which could include life threatening incidents. The days of Willowbrook may not be too far away if these cuts are implemented.

How do we find the way to manage cuts to these essential programs and services?

- Does it mean that 1 out of every 10 people with developmental disabilities are removed from our programs?
- Does it mean not for profit organizations may go out of business, never to return to provide essential services?
- Does it mean that 1 out of every 10 staff are eliminated?

Families who don't have services for their loved ones will have to leave their jobs and stay home to provide care and many direct care workers will lose their jobs. Fewer staff in the remaining programs will severely limit the ability to safely provide integrated, community based services—which we have fought many years to achieve. All these outcomes will not make New York State a better place to live!

If the recommended cuts are implemented, they will forever change the lives of families and individuals served by our organization. The commitments made by New York since the days of the Willowbrook exposé will be broken and the system will have difficulty rebounding.

We all understand that New York State is at an economic crossroads, but the arbitrary approach which calls for equal across the board cuts is contrary to common sense and meeting the real obligations for people’s lives in the community. New York State can do better.

Yours truly,

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Name

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Signature

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Address

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Affiliation to Westchester Arc