

Testimony Presented Before the Appropriations Committee

PUBLIC HEARING ON THE DEFICIT MITIGATION PLAN

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Good Afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and all committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak regarding the Governor's proposed Deficit Mitigation Plan. My name is Jane Davis, and I am Vice President of Organizational Development for Ability Beyond Disability.

I would like to provide for you some context for the people currently receiving services at Ability Beyond Disability. I have been at Ability Beyond Disability for twenty-five years, and have seen a steady progression towards a significantly changing population, requiring a significantly higher level of care.

Individuals that were at one time in ICF group homes, many of whom were at one time living in high-cost state Institutions and Hospitals, have been successfully transitioned to less restrictive services like supported living programs. We have focused on transitions like these because they were what was right for the individuals we serve, and because they allowed for the most efficient use of resources,

But the people we serve today in our ICF group homes represent an older, more medically fragile population than has ever before been seen. The extended life expectancy of people with disabilities has forced organizations like Ability Beyond Disability to increase the level of care provided, while lack of adequate funding, and proposed cuts to services, have continued.

I have some statistics taken from our ICF group homes that I would like to share with you.

In the last 4 years...and while serving the exact same number of people:

The number of individuals in our ICF group homes requiring enhanced supervision has doubled.

The number of individuals requiring hands-on assistance with toileting has doubled.

The number of individuals requiring special safety protocols or equipment like monitors or safety alarms has quadrupled.

The number of individuals with a special feeding or dietary protocol has doubled.

The number of individuals requiring adaptive equipment has quadrupled.

The number of medical appointments that our Consumers attend in a given year has more than doubled.

Again, these changes have occurred in the last 4 years alone.

I hope that these statistics illustrate for you that the people served by private providers like Ability Beyond Disability are experiencing changing needs like we have never seen before. The amount of care, supervision, and specialty services required, is consistently increasing.

The lack of sufficient funding has made providers look to themselves for every efficiency they can find.

We cannot accept or absorb another cut to our already stressed system, nor can we compromise the level of care provided to the most fragile people in the state.