

MH/MR COALITION

THE MENTAL HEALTH/MENTAL RETARDATION COALITION OF PENNSYLVANIA

August 18, 2010

The Honorable Keith McCall
PA House of Representatives
139 Main Capitol Building
House Box 202122
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2122

Dear Speaker McCall:

The MH MR Coalition is extremely concerned that the budget adjustments being contemplated as a result of a lower than anticipated Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) funding will result in yet another round of cuts for services for people with mental illness, intellectual disabilities and substance abuse disorders. It appears that after years of chronic under-funding, services to people with disabilities may once again be asked to carry the burden of balancing the budget. Addressing the budget gap should be an equitable process, with due consideration for programs that have already sustained cuts, avoiding further cuts while there are line items within the budget that have increased. It is crucial that funding be maintained for the following reasons:

- Community behavioral health services are vital to the health and well being of the community and must be sustained. The Commonwealth must prevent further damage to the safety net, repair the damage that has resulted from chronic under-funding for many years, and restore previous cuts as soon as the economy improves.
- State funding for behavioral health services has already been cut by more than \$35 million in the 2010/11 budget, on top of cuts in the two previous budgets. While the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) has utilized one-time federal Medicare funds and taken other measures to keep programs whole, we are concerned that this may not be possible in the future.
- Further cuts to behavioral health services will not create net savings, since costs will increase in emergency room utilization, inpatient admissions, correctional facilities, and in lost work for employers across the state.
- At a time when the lack of job growth is a key concern in the current economic climate, it is imperative that productive tax-paying Pennsylvanians not lose their jobs due to program closures and budget cut-backs.
- Demand for community services is growing as a result of economic instability, unemployment, loss of insurance coverage, and the needs of veterans returning from service in Iraq and Afghanistan and their families.

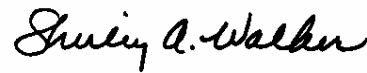
- Thousands of people with intellectual disabilities and their families depend on community-based services to ensure their continued health and safety as well as the quality of their daily lives. The Community MR Base appropriation was subjected to an across-the-board cut in the FY2011 budget adopted in July. Any further across-the-board cuts will violate the Governor's budgetary policy of protecting the Commonwealth's most vulnerable citizens.

The MHMR Coalition asks that you urge the Governor to protect crucially needed services for Pennsylvanians who rely on community programs to maintain productive lives in their communities by exempting Mental Health Services, Behavioral Health Services (BHSI), and the Community MR Base appropriations from his "across-the-board" 1.9% budget freeze.

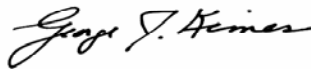
Sincerely,



Ilene Shane, Chief Executive Officer
Disability Rights Network of PA



Shirley A. Walker, President and CEO
Pennsylvania Association of Resources
for Autism & Intellectual Disabilities



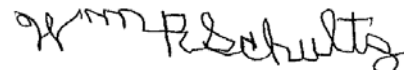
George J. Kimes, Executive Director
Pennsylvania Community Providers Association



Eugene Bianco, President and CEO
Pennsylvania Association of
Rehabilitation Facilities



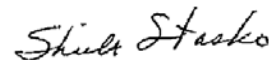
Steve Surovic, Executive Director
The Arc of Pennsylvania



William R. Schultz, Board President
United Cerebral Palsy of Pennsylvania



Sue Walther, Executive Director
Mental Health Association in Pennsylvania



Sheila Stasko
PA Waiting List Campaign



Lynn Keltz, Executive Director
PA Mental Health Consumers Association



Betty Simmonds, Board President
PA Behavioral Health and Aging Coalition

THE MH/MR COALITION INCLUDES ALL MAJOR ASSOCIATIONS REPRESENTING MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL RETARDATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN PENNSYLVANIA. FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, CONTACT ANY OF THE ORGANIZATIONS LISTED:

MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION IN PA (717.346.0549),
PA WAITING LIST CAMPAIGN (877.372.WAIT)
UNITED CEREBRAL PALSY OF PA (1.866.761.6129)
PA ASSOCIATION OF RESOURCES FOR AUTISM AND INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES (717.236.2374)
PA MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION (717.564.4930)

PA ASSOCIATION OF REHABILITATION FACILITIES (717.657.7608)
DISABILITY RIGHTS NETWORK (1.800.692.7443)
PA COMMUNITY PROVIDERS ASSOCIATION (717.364.3280)
THE ARC OF PA (717.234.2621)
PA BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND AGING COALITION (717.541.4219)