



The
Arc

Pennsylvania
SYSTEMS ADVOCACY • GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

Suite 8 – Executive House
101 South Second Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17101
(717) 234-2621 ♦ 234-7615 (fax)
www.thearcpa.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 15, 2008

CONTACT: Stephen H. Suroviec
Executive Director
717-234-2621

**The Arc of PA Reacts to State Budget:
*Pennsylvanians With Intellectual Disabilities & Their Families Not A Priority For State
Elected Officials***

HARRISBURG (PA): The Arc of Pennsylvania today expressed general disappointment in the results of last week's state budget because of its failure to adequately address the needs of Pennsylvanians with intellectual disabilities. Details of the final budget deal had been unclear immediately following passage of the appropriations bill, but some clarity was provided by Public Welfare Deputy Secretary Kevin Casey during a July 11th meeting of the Planning Advisory Committee for DPW's Office of Developmental Programs.

Existing community-based mental retardation (MR) programs are slated to get a 1% "COLA" (cost of living adjustment), which was added by the legislature following Governor Rendell's proposal to add zero new funds to account for inflation. Program inflation for 2008 is at least 3% according to the federal home health market basket index. In addition, an 1818-person waiting list initiative proposed by Governor Ed Rendell was apparently agreed to by the legislature and kept in the final budget. Over 4500 individuals are languishing on the statewide emergency waiting list for services according to state Public Welfare Department figures, while another 9,425 are on the "critical need" waiting list. (See PA Waiting List Campaign website www.pawaitinglistcampaign.org.)

At the same time, a 1.3% across-the-board reduction to Governor Rendell's proposed community MR budget was agreed to by the Governor and legislative leadership. Advocates for individuals with intellectual disabilities fear Public Welfare officials may impose these cuts in ways that hurt people by either reducing the waiting list initiative or effectively wiping out the 1% "COLA" for providers of services caring for 48,000 Pennsylvanians already in the system.

"Some elected officials have touted a 5.4% overall increase in the community MR budget, but the numbers within the numbers tell a completely different story – a story that is not good", said Steve Suroviec, Executive Director of The Arc of Pennsylvania. "Most of the increase will go to pay for last year's waiting list initiative or to serve a relatively small portion of this year's emergency waiting list." (*Last year, the state budget included funding to serve 3,400 people from the waiting list, yet most of those individuals were not placed into service until the latter half of the fiscal year. This year, DPW had little choice but to add funding in this budget to cover a full year of services for those individuals.*). "And the so-called 'COLA' of 1% is not really a COLA at all because it is grossly inadequate to cover the increased costs of fuel, housing, food, wages, and insurance in the system", Suroviec said.

"The bottom line is less than one-third of Pennsylvanians with intellectual disabilities with an emergency need will be funded by this budget, only 1% will be added to offset 3% inflation, and, on top if it all, a 1.3% cut is being imposed onto an already underfunded system. The Arc of PA believes this budget is continued evidence that Pennsylvanians with intellectual disabilities are not considered a priority by our elected state officials", Suroviec concluded.

The Arc was formed 59 years ago by a small group of devoted parents who wanted more for their children with mental retardation than an isolated life in a state institution. It has grown into the largest grassroots advocacy movement in the nation.

The Arc of Pennsylvania is affiliated with The Arc of the United States and 35 local chapters of The Arc across PA.

The
Arc

Advocacy & resources for citizens with
cognitive, intellectual and developmental disabilities