



DHS

Public email budget input

Aug. 1, 2004 – Aug. 20, 2004 – Brief summaries from email input around the state that has come into to the department through budget input email

address: dhs.budget-input@state.or.us

Bend, Oregon

Cost of Living Increases (COLAs) for those working in developmental disabilities – Concerned expressed from providers who are “really struggling” with the lack of COLAs due to mounting financial pressures in other areas including insurance, energy, and staff wages. Concern that the stability of community providers is at stake. Asked that funding for direct services take precedence over funding county administration and case management. Asked that budget reduction options #65 (reducing community care rates), #67 (reducing licensed community facility rates) and #77 (reducing other funds associated with developmental disabilities local match projects) not be made because they are “untenable in a system that is already deeply threatened by financial pressures.”

Christmas Valley, Oregon

Plea not to cut alcohol and drug helpline – Concern expressed about the budget reduction option to cut the Alcohol and Drug Helpline. Made case that it should be retained since it saves lives.

Clackamas, Oregon

AARP support for improving Adult Protective Services staffing – Support expressed from the Associate state Director for Advocacy for AARP Oregon for the department’s proposal to improve Adult Protective Services Staffing ratios. Nationally, the adult protective services administrators have recommended a 1 caseworker to 25 cases standard; in Oregon, APS staff often have 60-70 open cases at a time. This lack of resources for staffing was expressed as a barrier to adherence to statutory timeframes for completion of complaint investigations. Support expressed that by ranking this Policy Option Package #5 it shows the department’s commitment to this need.

Prior authorization language and Oregon Health Plan (OHP) prescription drugs – Concern posed about whether the department has considered the impact that the deletion of statutory language prohibiting prior authorization with regards to OHP prescription drugs. Citizen’s understanding that the prohibitive language was passed last session and the cost associated with that was estimated at about \$30 per biennium. For the period that prior authorization was in use last year, compliance with the OHP preferred drug list should have increased significantly, according to the citizen. Asked that with an estimated savings of \$15 million or more each year, some consideration should be given to this option.

Columbia County, Oregon

Move up some POPs and add more prevention dollars – Columbia County Mental Health Executive Director writes in to ask that Policy Option Package (POP) #19 (Evidence Based Practices) be moved up higher on the priority list to the top 5, because implementing it would significantly reduce the costs of hospitalizations. Concern that the state has abandoned prevention activities in the counties and asked that funding for this be added back to the state budget. If the state cannot fund county prevention efforts, concern that those that are being funded now through contingencies or other means by the counties will be eliminated due to lack of county funding.

Eugene, Oregon

Family with disabled children asks for more family supports, not less – Concerned that if we don't take care of these disabled children now, it will cost us more to take care of them later, if their problems increase due to lack of attention. Asking that more family supports be funded in the DHS budget. Explained that an early intervention – because of state supports -- with one of the mother's sons who has asperger's syndrome meant that he was able to return to public school and help tutor other special needs children, because of his high intelligence level. Used this as an example of how if we are smart about spending our dollars earlier, we will end up saving more money in the long run.

LaPine, Oregon

Concern about budget reduction option to cut hotline – Asked that the department try to avoid any budget reduction options that impact alcohol and drug problems, as they are related to many of the other issues clients in the system also face, so you are causing a domino effect. Cutting or eliminating the prevention hotlines will be in direct conflict with efforts to reduce or eliminate meth usage.

Lebanon, Oregon

Mother of son with disabilities asked for additional family support dollars – Requesting that the department add a policy package for restoration of family support dollars cut from the developmental disabilities program. Money needs to be restored so that people who are on the waiting list, who also deserve to receive services, can be helped.

Milwaukie, Oregon

Asking for restoration of past cuts to disability services – Person with disabilities asking that funding should be restored to previous biennium level for these programs and that the department should consider models tied to the economy and economic factors for spending on things such as disability services – in terms of increases and decreases.

North Bend, Oregon

Curry County official asks for more family supports – Chair of Curry County when family supports program first began asks the department to please make family supports funding available for more developmental disabled citizens and their families. Expressed many of the benefits these services provide including ability to travel to specialized hospital facilities, flexibility to function more like a traditional family because of supports offered, and alternatives made available for children that were housebound.

Oregon City, Oregon

Concern about funding family supports for the disabled – Mother of child with high-maintenance disabilities writes about concern over past years budget reductions in the family support area. Her position is that supporting families of special needs children should be the highest priority of the state, since keeping folks in their homes is a much less expensive way to care for them. Additional supports are needed for them to be successful in this situation. Asks that more of the budget be dedicated to this area.

Salem, Oregon

Restore family support dollars – Asked that the department add a Policy Option Package for the restoration of family support dollars cut from the developmental disabilities program during the 01-03 budget period. Expressed concern that their reductions have resulted in significant loss of supports to families caring for children with developmental disabilities and a growing waiting list of eligible families receiving no supports. Even with restoration of the previous funding levels, less than one-third of the eligible families will have access to supports, according to the concerned citizen.

Springfield, Oregon

Cuts to Categorically Needy – Concern about cuts impacting Oregon’s most fragile citizens: “the categorically needy.” Examples given were cuts made to Durable Medical Equipment allowables and quantities. Concern that proposed budget reduction option will reduce the quantity and quality of services and supplies available to all state clients. Asked that cuts not be made to any services to “survivability levels” which are now funded. Expressed the need for nursing home, in-home care, durable medical equipment and supplies to promote the well-being of this dependent group of Oregon citizens.

Comments and Concerns from undisclosed Oregon locations

- *Oregon Dental Association opposition to proposed elimination of adult dental care* – The Oregon Dental Association expressed opposition to the elimination of adult dental care within the 10% reduction package for the Oregon Health Plan (OHP) Medicaid population. The President of the Oregon Association raised the issue that if the adult dental benefit is eliminated “many people will try to access services at the hospital emergency room, an expensive and inefficient way to handle this need.” Concern was also expressed about taking care of the dental needs of pregnant women, who’s lack of dental care and dental care education can impact their young children. The group asked that DHS not split dental health from the total health package for this population.
- *Person with disabilities finds fault with possible reductions in Service Priority levels* – Concern expressed that the service priority level cut-offs are not realistic and should be changed. Also concern expressed that more time needs to be given to transition off services, if cuts are made in these areas. Also asked that the department maintain current services, so those that need them don’t feel they have to beg for them. Asked that the department “think outside the box” if cuts are needed and not further reduce services to people with disabilities.
- *Project Independence* – Concern about the reduction option that targets Project Independence. Asked for more clarification about what parts would be eliminated, if this reduction option were taken, and that the impact would be.
- *Restore family support dollars* – About a dozen citizens told individual stories and asked that the department adds a Policy Option Package for the restoration of family support dollars cut from the developmental disabilities program during the 01-03 budget period. Expressed concern that they reductions have resulted in significant loss of supports to families caring for children with developmental disabilities and a growing waiting list of eligible families receiving no supports. Even with restoration of the previous funding levels, less than one-third of the eligible families will have access to supports, according to the concerned citizen.
- *Concern about helping people understand where taxes go for people with disabilities* – Adult with severe disabilities writes in to express that he is concerned about people’s perception on taxes and funding for people like him. Concerned that people don’t understand where their taxes are going and why they should be funding people with disabilities.
- *Concern expressed about potential budget reductions to the elderly, disabled, and ill* – Writer expressed that these are the most needy people in our society and should not be further penalized through budget cuts. Asked that the state continue to find ways to help them live as independently as possible. Writer has a brother with brain damage who is living independently because of Oregon services and supports.
- *Concern about potential cuts to the alcohol and drug helpline* – Several citizens wrote in to express concern about possible reductions or elimination of this helpline. Pointed out that the calls that are handled also sometime prevent suicides.
- *Supports increase in Child Care Provider rates* – Support expressed about proposed increase in the child care provider rates, the decrease in the parent co-pays, and the eligibility increase. Concern about coupling the co-pay with the eligibility issue in the same Policy Option Package (POP) and would like to see them separate from each other if that could increase the chances of getting one or both of them passed by the legislature.