

News received from The Arc of North Carolina on the budget crisis in our state. For more updates, and to respond with action, sign up online for action alerts on their website at www.arcnc.org



This week the House of Representatives have come to grips with what a 4.5 billion dollar deficit will look like and have begun their attempts at a spending plan without increased revenues. The results will be disastrous for all North Carolinians and even worse for NC citizens with disabilities and their families.

In the Department of Health and Human Services the Committee is expected to reduce spending by 1.35 billion dollars. This cut must come from the 4.9 billion dollar state funds in the DHHS budget. A 20% cut is terrible in its own right but the DHHS only has 1.713 billion dollars that is not in the Medicaid program matching federal funds. Of the remaining 1.713 billion over 700 million is in the Division of MHDDAS. Any dollar cut in Medicaid adds an additional 2 dollars to the impact of the cut.

If the legislature doesn't raise revenue we can expect significant reductions in CAP/DD/personal care services/ state funded developmental disabilities services/vocational rehabilitation services and much more.

In education, class sizes will increase dramatically, teacher assistant's positions and other support services will be eliminated and the school year will be shortened by 5-10 days. Community colleges who train workers for our field will be slashed as well as University programs that produce teachers and professionals who support people with disabilities will be severely cut.

In essence the gains we have all worked for in the past 20 years will be eliminated in one budget year! This will also add to the revenue crisis because more jobs will be lost in our economy causing the economic condition of our state to worsen.

We are working with the administration and the General Assembly to help them look at areas to cut that will do the least damage but no amount of focus will make these cuts acceptable.

Often when the state has a budget shortfall legislators and departments will suggest cuts that are untenable just to have the public react. This may be the case this time but no legislator or member of the administration is saying this. They continue to indicate these cuts are necessary because we will not raise revenue.

I believe we can still make a difference but it will be necessary for Chapters of The Arc, our members and all others who care about people with disabilities and their families to make talking to their legislator the highest priority! If members of the general assembly understand that their constituents want them to raise revenue to save the states vital services they will be more likely to act. What I am certain of is if we fail to respond people with disabilities and their families will see significant and life changing reductions in the supports and services offered by North Carolina.

On Tuesday or Wednesday you will receive an alert from us asking you to take specific actions. Please be prepared to act and to engage all of your networks to do the same. This time your action will be the difference.