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California's protection and advocacy system

PRESS RELEASE

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Governor burns California's safety net: Californians with disabilities to lose in-home help; medical, therapy, education and transportation services; and income to cover rent and food

In the May revise, Governor Schwarzenegger's latest round of proposed cuts to state programs and services are so severe that they would effectively incinerate California's safety net to ensure survival of people with disabilities, including seniors.

Low-income Californians with disabilities are now facing cutbacks in every aspect of their daily lives—medical and dental services, assistance in feeding and bathing, mental health services, day therapy programs, transportation, access to education, and reduction of their already poverty-level income which must pay for food and rent (SSI). For the estimated 387,000 who will lose their in-home help, the tens of thousands who depend on the modest subsidies and accessible services, gutting this system will result in endangerment, forced moves to nursing homes which will cost 5 times as much, isolation and deterioration of health conditions.

There are numerous serious cuts proposed, some programs have been targeted for eradication, and most low-income Californians with disabilities will be facing multiple reductions.

In other words, a 56 year old woman with diabetes, who can only afford her apartment through SSI, could now: have her monthly SSI check cut by \$78; lose her in-home support service (IHSS) worker who has been helping her to bathe, pay bills and shop for, prepare and eat her meals for 4 hours each day; lose her dental coverage, podiatry care and accessible transport to medical appointments; and watch her supported-work program close, providing her with regular interaction with people in the community.

Similarly, hundreds of thousands of children or youths with disabilities can simultaneously face: greatly reduced educational and therapeutic services supported by their local regional center; loss of eligibility for paratransit services; complete loss of health coverage under Healthy Families program; and loss of income for necessities from CalWorks.

“When we look closely at a typical day of a low-income Californian with significant disability, we can see why these cuts—taken together—could easily destroy the fabric of countless individual lives, and the larger social safety-net,” stressed Catherine Blakemore, executive director of Disability Rights California. “We refuse to go backwards to a time when people with disabilities could not live safely in the community and their only option was nursing homes. We have to be more creative about raising revenue and more humane in defining our bottom lines.”

Cuts will also cause rise in unemployment

Just the proposed cuts in one program alone—IHSS—would result in hundreds of thousands of people losing their home health care workers. This cost-effective program would be gutted and it is estimated that California’s unemployment rate would rise from 11% to 12.8%, as tens of thousands of workers would lose their jobs providing IHSS services.