



The Coalition

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The Honorable Beverly Perdue
Office of the Governor
20301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC

October 14, 2009

Dear Governor Perdue,

North Carolina's Community mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse (MHDDSA) system has been hit by a man made hurricane and faces a crisis worse than any natural disaster ever to hit our state. Thousands of individuals and families who rely on the services provided by this system are being abandoned by our state.

In addressing the North Carolina budget short fall created by the economic crisis the North Carolina General Assembly disproportionately reduced funding for the MHDDSA community service system. The cuts imposed by the General Assembly will amount to more than a 500 million dollar cut to the community service system. This amounts to at least a 25% reduction in services affecting almost every facet of the system designed to assist individuals with disabilities and addiction to live in North Carolina communities. No other sector in the state suffered such a reduction.

Life sustaining services that put a roof over people's heads, keep them off the streets, get and keep employment, stay out of jail, care for family members and learn and retain skills that keep them alive and well were particularly hard hit. Medicaid programs designed to assist individuals in communities, instead of institutions, were devastated and rates for remaining services were slashed. Services that were more likely to help the system by keeping people out of crisis took the deepest reductions. All of this while institutional services, systems management and administration faced relatively minor cuts. This is an opportunity to "right" the system away from services that are not working, but only if we are able to retain the funds for those services that do work well.

Due to the timing in implementing these cuts the full effect is just beginning to surface. People who have lived successfully in communities are seeing their services slashed or eliminated, their homes closed, and their jobs and day supports disappear. Our crisis



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system will soon be overrun. North Carolina Citizens who have no where else to turn are being shut out.

Beyond the human cost, there is an additional economic crisis created by these cuts. Thousands North Carolina jobs are being lost in clinical care, direct support, and by families all the while our state leaders look for jobs overseas and provide companies financial incentives to offset the economic downturn. Avoiding these cuts will save jobs...jobs that are in every county in North Carolina and prevent a further decline in the economy and tax base.

The Coalition and the individuals it advocates for thank you for finding fifteen million dollars for MHDDSA community services to offset the additional cuts taken after the session closed. This move to restore funding is what the system needs to stabilize and will ensure that some people threatened with loss of access can continue to get the services and supports they need to remain in their communities. We ask that should revenue projections fall short over the next nine months, that community MHDDSA services be spared further cuts.

In addition, we, the members of The Coalition call upon you as Governor to stand up for the citizens of our state and take further steps by calling the General Assembly into an emergency special session to address this crisis and take the following actions:

- Utilize the increased alcohol taxes specifically to fund services for addictive disease, mental illness, and developmental disabilities.
- Find emergency funding to offset the deepest of the Medicaid cuts to services.
- Replace dollars removed to offset Federal “stimulus” funds: MHDDSA jobs are on the ground and already “shovel ready.”
- Restore funding to services with any reserves or unencumbered dollars wherever they exist in the system.
- Suspend unnecessary administrative oversight and processes.
- Reduce institutional spending in order to more equitably spread funding reductions.
- Require the Department of Commerce to track job loss specific to MHDDSA employers.

Most of these actions will not cost the state additional funding but they may avoid a total collapse of our system. We urge you to take action now to address this crisis. The



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Coalition and its members stand ready to assist your office, The General Assembly, The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and The Division of MHDDSAS in its efforts to make the system more efficient and effective.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Mahan
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Addiction Professionals of North Carolina
Alcohol/Drug Council of North Carolina
The Arc of North Carolina
Association of Self Advocates of NC
Autism Society of NC
Brain Injury Association of NC
Coalition for Persons Disabled by Mental Illness*
Developmental Disabilities Consortium*
Disability Rights NC
Easter Seals UCP North Carolina
Governor's Institute on Alcohol & Substance Abuse
Licensed Professional Counselors of North Carolina
Mental Health Association – NC
Mental Retardation Association of NC
MS Society of NC
National Alliance on Mental Illness North Carolina
National Association of Social Workers – NC Chapter
North Carolina Association of Alcohol Residential Facilities
North Carolina Association for Marriage & Family Therapy
North Carolina Association of Rehabilitation Facilities

North Carolina Association of the Deaf
North Carolina Assoc. of Developmental Day Directors
North Carolina Assoc. of Persons in Supported Employment
North Carolina Council for Community Programs
North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities
North Carolina Counseling Association
North Carolina Guardianship Association
North Carolina Interagency Coordinating Council
North Carolina Mental Health Consumers' Organization
North Carolina Nurses Association
North Carolina Providers Council
North Carolina Psychiatric Association
North Carolina Psychological Association
North Carolina Psychological Foundation
North Carolina Substance Abuse Prevention Providers Association
North Carolina Substance Abuse Providers Association
RHA Howell, Inc.
Substance Abuse Federation
TROSA