



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Senator Kennedy Protests Cuts to Developmental Disabilities Programs, Urges Reinstatement of State Support

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY March 8, 2013

| ISSUE: **FAMILIES**

In recent budget hearing, Kennedy pressed OPWDD Commissioner for answers on how the state will protect the high quality of care in light of a potential six percent funding cut.

At Kennedy's urging, Senate Democratic Conference makes restoration of cuts a top statewide priority at negotiating table.

Kennedy writes letter to Governor urging him to eliminate cuts and restore funding for critical services for people with disabilities.

ALBANY, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, is fighting against substantial funding cuts that may be imposed upon local programs that people with developmental disabilities and their families need on a daily basis. **At a recent public hearing in Albany**, Senator Kennedy pressed officials from the state Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) for their plans to ensure that individuals with disabilities maintain access to high-quality care in light of the proposed six percent funding cut to local support services.

Senator Kennedy is working to block the proposed cuts and reinstate funding for critical services for individuals with disabilities. At Kennedy's urging, the Senate Democratic Conference has made restoration of these cuts one of their statewide priorities at the budget negotiating table. **Kennedy has also sent a letter to the Governor** urging him to eliminate the

cuts and restore state support for these important services.

“These cuts pose a major threat to our state’s most vulnerable citizens. If enacted, they will jeopardize critical services that individuals with disabilities and their families rely on,” Kennedy said. “We must stop these cuts and restore state aid to protect the people who need our support the most.”

Kennedy has supported the efforts of local families and care providers, as they fight back against proposed cuts. The cuts would largely fall upon the backs of local non-profits, on which the state relies heavily to provide various services to families.

“Leaders at several local non-profit organizations have informed me that the proposed cuts could push them into insolvency and force them to close their doors. Without the services they provide, local families would face serious struggles in order to secure adequate care for their loved ones,” Kennedy said. “It’s absolutely urgent that we protect our most vulnerable citizens and ensure they have access to not just adequate care, but high-quality care. I urge my colleagues in state government to join me – we must prevent these cuts and protect our state’s critical support services, particularly for those who are medically frail or have severe behavioral issues.”

This problem did not develop overnight. The federal government says that for years the state has overbilled Medicaid for the care and services provided to people with disabilities in the state’s developmental centers. In response, the federal government is reducing the state’s reimbursement rate by \$1.1 billion this year. The state negotiated \$600 million in new federal funding for 2013-14, to help address the \$1.1 billion rate reduction. However, this still leaves a substantial gap.

The executive budget proposal suggests filling this gap through a \$120 million cut to the OPWDD budget. This \$120 million cut will fall entirely onto the backs of non-profit organizations that provide OPWDD services. The federal government matches state funding, which means the state's cut will lead to another \$120 million cut. It leaves local non-profit providers scrambling to combat total cuts of \$240 million. This amounts to a 6 percent across the board cut to all OPWDD non-profit support and services.

Senator Kennedy is actively fighting to restore funding to local providers of OPWDD services and supports.

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Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 63rd District, which is comprised of the towns of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.