



Action Alert
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President, The Arc of California

Tuesday, June 16, 2009

As a parent, I must take strong exception to the decision our elected Legislators made yesterday to ignore the will of the people of the State of California, by decimating the Lanterman Act. We must let them know how this has harmed our children and our children's future.

The 10 members of the Legislature's budget conference committee late yesterday accepted, without discussion, Governor Schwarzenegger's devastatingly destructive cuts in the support system for people with developmental disabilities and their families.

The six Democrats and four Republican legislators voted 10-0 to accept all of the cuts recommended by Schwarzenegger's Department of Developmental Services.

Virtually every Californian with a developmental disability will be hurt. For thousands of people, this very likely will mean the end of the Lanterman Act's promise of the most appropriate supports for people with DD. Children who could have been saved from serious disabilities by early intervention will have those serious disabilities as long as they live.

We're working on a summary of these cuts. Please check www.ArcCalifornia.org soon.

This catastrophe wasn't necessary. The Arc and other community groups relentlessly presented responsible alternatives that would have saved the state just as much money without these terrible results. In the end, Governor Schwarzenegger and these 10 legislators ignored us.

Our community must respond promptly and strongly. Please call Governor Schwarzenegger and the 10 legislators immediately and express your strong disappointment, even outrage if that's what you feel. Their numbers are at the bottom of this Action Alert.

We are especially disappointed in those we've always seen as our friends, beginning with Governor Schwarzenegger, a supporter of the Special Olympics and the son-in-law of disability champion Eunice Kennedy Shriver. His Department of Developmental Services proposed more cuts than necessary to meet the dollar goals Governor Schwarzenegger ordered them to meet, and they disregarded our alternative proposals.

The department convinced the 10 legislators that the community “stakeholders” all supported these cuts. We did not.

Our groups’ professional advocates in Sacramento clearly and repeatedly, as recently as yesterday morning, let the legislators’ staff members know that these cuts were the Schwarzenegger administration’s proposals, not ours, and that we have concrete alternatives. Hundreds of people testified at three separate hearings with some of these 10 legislators present. Thousands called, emailed and faxed letters to all 10 of them.

For us, the cruelest betrayal was by legislators who have been our friends, who have visited our service programs, spoken at our conferences and meetings, supported some of our bills in the past, listened respectfully to our testimony, and even spoken about how Governor Schwarzenegger’s proposed cuts were too much.

Assemblywoman Noreen Evans, the committee chair, had said all the harmful cuts that Governor Schwarzenegger proposed should at least be temporary, yet she ignored our repeated urgent appeals to make any cuts in the DD support system temporary. We had let Ms. Evans know that the department was flatly wrong when it said or implied that the “stakeholder” groups supported some of the cuts, yet today she said that they were “developed by the stakeholder groups.”

Senator Mark Leno had told an earlier public hearing that the amount Governor Schwarzenegger proposed to cut was too much, yet today he voted for it. He had seriously questioned the department’s proposals to shift much of the decision-making power over the IPPs from the IPP teams to the regional centers, yet today he didn’t say a word as the committee adopted them.

Assemblyman Robert Blumenfield, **Assemblyman Kevin de Leon**, **Senator Denise Ducheny**, and **Senator Alan Lowenthal**, all people we have considered our good friends, were silent -- and all voted for the cuts.

Senator Robert Dutton, **Senator Mimi Walters**, **Assemblyman Jim Nielsen**, and **Assemblyman Roger Niello** also all went along with all the cuts.

Please call them all and tell them what you think of their votes today.

- Don’t be shy. Our community’s future rests on politicians learning that attacking our vulnerable people has consequences. Speak your mind, even if your voice shakes.
- Don’t be deterred if they have represented you well in the past. They didn’t represent you today.
- Don’t be bothered if you know and like them. This isn’t personal, it’s about what’s right for people with DD and their families. Friends tell friends when they feel betrayed.

Depending on how much well-deserved criticism they receive in the next few days, there may be some chance to reverse some of the worst cuts, or at least make them temporary. Without a community response, there's no chance.

The department's next "stakeholder" meeting to advise the department on the bill language is today. We and the other groups will be there fighting for our community.

Please phone all 11 if you're able. Calls have more impact. The email addresses are for people who can't call. The fax numbers are for faxing letters on your group's letterhead.

If you live in the district represented by any of the 10 legislators, start by giving them your name and address so they know you're their constituent. If you're a member of the same party as theirs, say so.

All of their phone numbers are in the 916 area code.

- Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, 445-2841, 558-3160 (fax), email using the web form at www.ArcCalifornia.org, "Write Your Legislators."
- Assemblywoman Noreen Evans, 319-2007, 319-2107 (fax), assemblymember.evans@assembly.ca.gov
- Senator Denise Ducheny, 651-4040, 327-3522 (fax), senator.ducheny@sen.ca.gov
- Senator Robert Dutton, 651-4031, 327-2272 (fax), senator.dutton@sen.ca.gov
- Senator Mark Leno, 651-4003, 445-4722 (fax), senator.leno@sen.ca.gov
- Senator Alan Lowenthal, 651-4027, 327-9113 (fax), senator.lowenthal@sen.ca.gov
- Senator Mimi Walters, 651-4033, 445-9754 (fax), senator.walters@sen.ca.gov
- Assemblyman Roger Niello, 916-319-2005, 319-2105 (fax), assemblymember.niello@assembly.ca.gov
- Assemblyman Kevin de Leon, 319-2045, 319-2145 (fax), assemblymember.deleon@assembly.ca.gov
- Assemblyman Bob Blumenfield, 319-2040, 319-2140 (fax), assemblymember.blumenfield@assembly.ca.gov
- Assemblyman Jim Nielsen, 319-2002, 319-2102 (fax), assemblymember.nielsen@assembly.ca.gov

Please call all 11 of them now. And please forward this Action Alert far and wide.

*Dwight Stratton
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The Arc of California*