

SAMPLE TALKING POINTS

Talking Points on Special Session AB 1, the Governor's "Budget Reform Bill," and its effect on services to people with disabilities:

What does the bill do?

- The state has a 2-year budget. The current budget plans for spending \$1.1 billion more than the state will receive.
- The bill cuts spending and takes money from the tobacco settlement fund to balance the budget.

What are the 'pros and cons' of the bill?

- Pro: Preserves state funding for such critical programs as the Community Options Program (COP), the Community Integration Program (CIP), Birth-to-Three, Family Support and DVR.

In the original budget bill, the State Legislature provided an increase of \$20 million GPR, which would have served over 2,600 people currently on waiting lists for community services. Governor McCallum vetoed \$8.5 million GPR. This bill would make no further cuts in State funding.

- Con: It eliminates Shared Revenue over 3 years, which will mean that people with disabilities may lose those county services that are county-funded or funded by shared revenues.

What is shared revenue?

- Wisconsin's 95-year old system of aid to local (county, city and municipal) governments. The state has a pool of state tax funds that compensates communities with the fewest resources of their own, such as people in poor or rural areas.
- Shared revenue may help pay for police, fire, emergency shelter, libraries and human services. The communities decide how the money is spent.

How do we know shared revenue cuts will hurt people with disabilities?

- The bill proposes to cut the shared revenue to counties by \$149.5 million per year. In Milwaukee County alone, the cut is approximately 17% of the tax base.
- County officials from all over the state have said they will be forced to set priorities and cut services.

SURVIVAL COALITION OF WISCONSIN DISABILITY ORGANIZATIONS

For more information on County "People Can't Wait" Coalitions: Arc-Wisconsin, 600 Williamson St. Madison, WI 53703 Toll-free Phone: (877) 272-8400 or (608) 251-9272, fax (608) 251-1403. Email: arcwjim@chorus.net. The TDD/TTY line is at the WCDD (608) 266-6660.

- Reductions will hurt the neediest communities—those with the smallest tax bases-- the most.
- In addition to the amount they are legally required to contribute, counties voluntarily contribute over \$50 million per year to fund services such as apartment or group home living, respite, supportive home care, and employment services. These services to people with disabilities will be “in competition” with police, fire, etc. for funding.
- Counties have put up most of the match money for CIP and have provided almost all the increases for providers for the past several years. Most of this is done with local revenues. Without shared revenues these funds will be in serious jeopardy.

Can counties raise taxes to make up the lost shared revenue funding?

- The proposed bill prohibits counties from raising tax levies more than the rate of inflation. This is less than the amount lost in share revenue.

How else can the state make up the \$1.1 billion budget deficit?

A number of disability, child welfare, and inter-faith organizations have proposed options to balance the budget. These include:

- Targeted cuts in State government instead of completely eliminating the shared revenue program.
- Restructure the Transportation Fund (\$1.5 billion per year is set aside for road-building. If less money went into transportation, there would be money to balance the budget.);
- Close tax loopholes;
- A one-time income tax surcharge (this was effective in balancing the State Budget the last time there was a big deficit);
- Closing one or more of the State Centers for the Developmentally Disabled may result in substantial savings that could be used for community services;
- Capture more federal dollars to offset state expenses.

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