



September 22, 2020

Dear Governor Jay Inslee,

On behalf of people with developmental disabilities and their families in Washington State, we are alarmed by the devastating cuts being proposed to community-based supports and services in the 2021-2023 biennial budget presented to the Official of Financial Management by the Department of Social and Health Services.

We respectfully urge you, Governor Inslee, and the Legislature to remember that there are already over 14,000 people who are not receiving any paid services, despite being eligible, due to a severe under-investment in supporting the needs of people with developmental disabilities. Washington State ranked 41<sup>st</sup> in the nation for funding community-based services before the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving our already underfunded community ill equipped to survive budget cuts of this magnitude.

The proposed budget describes how 6,500 clients with “lighter care needs” would lose paid services. This gives the impression that people with disabilities do not need these supports to live; that is simply not true. Many of these people rely on these services to survive, keep out of poverty, and avoid dangerous, unstable living situations like homelessness and unnecessary hospitalization.

Additionally, we are seriously concerned about proposed rate reductions to service providers, who are the lifeblood to people with disabilities and their families. Without a stable provider workforce and living wages for direct support professionals, we will continue to see the elimination of services, only compounding the harmful effects of eligibility reductions and further jeopardizing the health and safety of people with disabilities and their families.

We appreciate the gravity of the economic crisis and understand that DSHS is left with few choices for budget reductions. However, we hope you and the Legislature agree not only that this proposed budget does not make financial sense, but it would also lead to an unethical and potentially irreversible abandonment of our state’s responsibility to protect the health and safety of people with disabilities and their families. Many would be left to literally fend for themselves.

The time is now to prioritize people with disabilities and their families, starting with the 2021-2023 biennial budget and beyond. The advocacy organizations below are committed to working with you, your office and the state legislature to preserve client eligibility and provider rates, and above all to ensure irresponsible cuts do not cause further crisis.

Respectfully,

**Stacy Dym, The Arc of Washington State**

**Jeremy Norden-Paul, Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council**

**Jessica Renner, Self Advocates in Leadership (SAIL)**

The following organizations join us in voicing their alarm regarding these proposed cuts:



### Our Community Partners:

- Allies in Advocacy
- Clallum County Parent 2 Parent
- Clallum Mosaic
- Community Employment Alliance (CEA)
- Community Homes
- Concerned Citizens
- Foundation for the Challenged
- Kitsap County Parent Coalition
- Office of Developmental Disability Ombuds
- Parents Empowered and Communities Enhanced (PEACE)
- Pierce County Parent Coalition for Developmental Disabilities (PC2)
- The Arc of Cowlitz County
- The Arc of King County
- The Arc of Snohomish County
- The Arc of Spokane
- The Arc of Tri-Cities
- The Arc of Whatcom County
- Washington Initiative for Supported Employment (WISE)
- Washington PAVE (Partnerships for Action Voices for Empowerment)
- Washington State Independent Living Council
- Washington State Rehabilitation Council
- Yakima Valley Community SEEDS (Support, Education, Empowerment, Disability Solutions)