

To: *HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE*

From: Elizabeth M. Sightler

Executive Director, Champlain Community Services (CCS)

February 13, 2018

I have been asked to provide a prediction of what a 2% cut to Champlain Community Services means:

A 2% cut to CCS equates to roughly \$100,000. \$100,000 divided equally among the 70 people is ~\$1500 each

\$1500 equates to:

- 30 hours of **service coordination**/year,
- 1. **Or**, 1 hour/week of **community** or **vocational** support,
- **Or**, loss of **nursing** AND **psychiatric** for everyone,
- **Or**, loss of **two service coordinators**
- **Or**, 7 1/2 days respite/year, per consumer

However, most likely cuts would target the most independent people we serve and the cuts would affect them at a higher than 2% rate. These cuts would affect people whose needs have not changed.

Half of CCS consumers live with shared living providers (SLPs). SLPs have not had regular pay raises for years – and many have never had a raise. Past cuts have targeted respite, community and supported employment, which means that more pressure is put on already overworked SLP's. Additionally, historically poor compensation of Direct Support Professionals means high turnover - which adds additional burden to SLPs. Pressure on SLP's sometimes means homelessness for the people we support. CCS has few people contacting us to be home providers and while we maintain a private Respite Bed/Crisis bed, a cut to services could cause a reconsideration of this support to home providers – adding even more pressure.


Examples:

- BL has 10 hours of work supports a week. He works at Hannaford's - they *require* him to work two 5 hour shifts a week. His home providers are kind enough to provide him with the transportation to/from work each shift so he can work this job. They stay for 10-15 minutes to assist with getting ready. His home providers, like many, are already going above and beyond. Any reduction to this vocational funding would be an immediate loss of employment. Hannaford's needed someone for two 5-hour shifts, and if he can't work it – he will be let go. And, we had to change his schedule and staffing to meet the needs of Hannaford's to obtain employment.
- EL currently lives independently in an apartment in Williston. With a cut to either his weekly home supports or his service coordination he would no longer be able to live on his own. His DSP's currently support him with tasks such as keeping his apartment clean/safe, budgeting his money, grocery shopping, meal prepping, banking, etc. Without these supports his needs would not be met and it would no longer be safe for him to live independently. He recently "graduated" from Safety Connections and his supports are already at "bare minimum"

- With ET's parents live 1.5 hours away, the service coordination hours that he receives are essential. In addition to ISA's, Needs Assessments, monthly summaries, and the other necessary paperwork to ensure that EL continues to receive services, there is also paperwork to ensure that he continues to receive his benefits and can keep his housing. This includes submitting his pay stubs each week to ensure he continues receiving SSI, completing paperwork and setting up interviews to ensure that he continues to receive rental assistance to offset the cost of his apartment, following up with maintenance to ensure that his apartment remains safe and in working order, supporting him through the process of applying for bus accommodations so that he is able to be more independent with transportation, and many other tasks that ensure he is able to be as independent as possible within his home and the community. A 2% cut across the board could result in providing up to 33% less support to EL through service coordination each week.
- An hour cut in direct services per week would leave three consumers who use Facilitated/Augmentative Communication without a voice for over 50 hours per year. One of these men works as a blogger/community speaker and only has 9 hours of supports/weekly. Another has a micro-business that requires communication to be successful. The third only began communicating 3 years ago - He's 51 years-old. In addition, cuts to services make it harder to keep trained staff on board and progressing to become effective Facilitators. Training staff while experiencing a 28% turnover rate is difficult.
- Cuts to respite leave home providers burnt out and unwilling to support high-needs clients. J, who has lived in a home for more than 5 years with an SLP who just received additional respite to keep him in the home. He receives excellent care and the SLP needed more respite due to life changes. SLP would leave if respite is reduced.
- We have identified 9 homes which we predict would be destabilized by cuts to respite
- Recently two clients experienced homelessness, and try as we might, their care suffered
- Cuts to community supports would leave another client, K, unable to live independently. He cannot take care of himself. We oversee his medications (special care procedures with a catheter), perform daily exercises with him and provide home supports, cooking cleaning etc... These supports allow him to remain independent and healthy. They are at the bare minimum already. There are two additional consumers with similar minimal services whose stability would be affected by a cut. One -who is frequently targeted and victimized only has supports twice/week.

The proposed cuts may seem like cost saving measures in the short run, but in the long run they will cost more as emergency room visits, police involvement and the court system will have to respond to people losing services. We are providing front-line services to keep vulnerable individuals safe and thriving in our communities. **While services can be cut, the needs still exist.** The needs will be met either by us, the courts or hospitals.

Respectfully Submitted,


Elizabeth M. Sightler