



June 19, 2020 – As self-advocates, we stand for the rights of people with developmental and intellectual disabilities to live and work in our communities. The Washington Department of Social and Health Services has proposed budget cuts that would strip us of these rights and put our lives at risk.

We urge state leaders to consider the impacts:

- **Personal care:** Many of us depend on personal care to be fed, get out of bed, shower and use the restroom. Under the proposed cuts, more than 20,000 people in our state would become ineligible for this help.
- **Housing:** When offered a choice, 99 percent of us have chosen to live in the community. Section 8 housing makes it possible for us to live on our own instead of depending on relatives or getting by in a congregated care setting. Now we are in danger of losing our homes. Congregate care raises our risk of exposure to COVID-19 and other illnesses. For those of us who have no options, we are at risk of becoming homeless.
- **Public transportation:** Many of don't drive and can't afford a car. Accessible public transportation allows us to get to work, school, medical appointments, the grocery store and visit others in our community. We have no affordable accessible alternatives. If you take away our transportation, it will isolate us.
- **Jobs:** We could lose our jobs if we can no longer work with Developmental Disability Administration employment specialists and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation employment counselors.
- **Medical services:** Quality medical care is essential to treat our various conditions. We rely on Medicaid and Medicare. Under DSHS's proposal, millions in matching federal Medicaid dollars would be cut.
- **Behavioral health care:** Scaling back behavioral health programs would have devastating consequences, especially given the slash to other support services. Without supports, individuals could be institutionalized. Loss of independence can cause people to spiral into depression, which left untreated, can lead to loss of life.

These cuts would only widen the existing service gap. Of those who are eligible for Developmental Disability Administration programs, 15,000 receive no services because there aren't state dollars to pay for them.

Furthermore, the state needs to rethink its eligibility criteria for receiving support services. Basing eligibility on a person's IQ or activities of daily living isn't the right approach. Under the proposed cuts, even basic needs would be gravely affected. We are in favor of person-centered planning that considers an individual's wants—not just their needs—and their right to be independent and live a full life.

We invite leaders from the Department of Social and Health Services and its divisions, Developmental Disabilities Administration and Aging and Long-Term Support Administration, to meet with us to discuss these issues further. Such important decisions should not be made without scrutinizing the consequences. Self-advocates depend on these support services and are in a prime position to lend a firsthand account of what those outcomes would be. The time is now to reconsider these proposed cuts and make a public statement supporting community services for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

Sincerely,

Self Advocates in Leadership (SAIL)  
People First of Washington  
Allies in Advocacy

Self Advocates in Leadership, People First of Washington and Allies in Advocacy together represent more than 1,200 Washington residents with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

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