



CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION FOR **HEALTHCARE AT HOME**SM

People Behind The Budget Cuts Make Their Pitch

By: Christine Stuart | April 9, 2015



Room of doctors and healthcare providers protesting Medicaid cuts
Photo by Christine Stuart

Community providers, doctors, nursing homes, hospitals, unions, and autism advocates came to the state Capitol Wednesday to beg lawmakers not to approve \$1.3 billion in spending cuts proposed by Gov. Dannel P. Malloy.

At the Legislative Office Building nonprofit community providers who care for individuals with developmental disabilities decried about \$160 million in cuts to their programs, over at the state Capitol the Connecticut Humanities Council protested a \$2 million funding cut, while doctors in white lab coats made their rounds to protest hundreds of millions of dollars in Medicaid cuts.

Patrick Johnson, interim executive director of the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits, said if the cuts are allowed to move forward “programs will be closed, services will be reduced and nonprofit agencies, in some cases will be driven out of business.” He said waiting lists for services will grow longer and emergency rooms will see an increase number of patients because services are not available in the community.

“It ignores the needs of our most vulnerable citizens,” Johnson said. “...What the governor has proposing is unreasonable, unjust, uncaring, and unconscionable.”



Deborah Hoyt, president and CEO of the CT Association for Healthcare at Home
Photo by Christine Stuart

Deborah Hoyt, president and CEO of the CT Association for Healthcare at Home, said cuts in Medicaid rates for a variety of programs, including home behavioral health services, would be devastating. That’s the part that lawmakers seem to understand.

However, what they wanted to know from advocates Wednesday was suggestions for how to balance the budget without the cuts.

Hoyt said it was a question they couldn’t really answer.

“We’re providing care and we’re affording the state some tremendous savings as a result of the unique collaboration that we’ve come together under,” Hoyt said.

She said the Department of Social Services admitted the shift in serving people in the most appropriate setting as they age is working. She said the savings are being realized, but this budget would destroy the progress toward a more efficient and effective system of care.

“The providers have saved \$533.5 million over 5 years,” Hoyt said.

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She said the challenge is to communicate to the legislators “that we’re a savings vehicle for state Medicaid.” She said they have to ensure this population, which is growing, can be served.

But lawmakers are frustrated with the budget they were handed by Malloy.



*Rep. Cathy Abercrombie, D-Meriden
Photo by Christine Stuart*

Rep. Cathy Abercrombie, D-Meriden, told a group of community providers that the governor’s budget “is the worst budget I’ve ever seen in my life.”

She said it’s impossible to have three straight budgets with deficits over \$1 billion and think there’s still a lot left to cut. She said as co-chair of the Human Services Committee she will propose adding back “hundreds of millions of dollars.”

“We have to talk about revenue,” Abercrombie said. “Revenue has to be on the table.”

Abercrombie said she’s not at liberty to discuss what type of revenues her caucus is discussing, but “the Democratic caucus in the House has been talking about revenue.”

However, Sen. Beth Bye, who co-chairs the legislature’s Appropriations Committee, said she isn’t ready to talk about revenue yet. She said they are looking cutting hundreds of millions of dollars.

“We’re putting some things back and we’re cutting some things that weren’t cut,” Bye said. “We’re looking at every line item.”

She said “it’s still too early to say there are tax increases. We’re still putting it together.”

Sen. Rob Kane, R-Watertown, said it doesn’t matter that some Democrats want to increase revenue because of the constitutional spending cap. He said they can try and raise revenue, but they won’t be able to spend it.

And due to the success of the Republicans in the 2014 election, they don’t have the votes to exceed the spending cap, he said. In the meantime, Kane said he would be watching closely to see if they try to get around the cap by moving money outside the general fund when the Appropriations Committee chairs release their budget later this month.