



Vigil and Budget –The fight for our cause has only just begun...

October 16, 2009



The Vigil and its impact...

Eight long days ago we started a vigil – thank you to our partners, ADDP and Mass. Families Organizing for Change. We also want to recognize MASS, MDSC and others who supported this effort along with the provider agencies who made themselves available as a support and resource to families and individuals. We will recognize all of them next week.

On Monday we will end this phase of our vigil but please stay tuned for other related activities. But the fight is not over as you will read later. However, you have made an impact as hundreds of people have turned out and Governor Patrick has visited with attendees on four of the days since Thursday. The vigil has been an overwhelming success in the sense that people with disabilities, their families and caretakers are now in the minds of the Governor, his staff and many legislators. Many of the vigil attendees made sure they visited their legislators during this process. Legislators have commented positively on our outreach – our presence has been felt.



Still, the underlying problems that the Commonwealth faces have not been resolved. The severe economic downturn still risks significant portions of our safety net infrastructure.

As some of you know all too well, the Family Support safety net has already been compromised with previous cuts.

Yesterday's budget announcement and what's at risk?

I was present at the Governor's announcement and he mentioned the vigil attendees that have been at his office, another sign that we have made an impact. Nevertheless, the financial situation remains the same with \$600 Million to be cut this year and a projected \$2 Billion deficit next year. The governor stated that he would seek to be "*doing the least harm as possible*" but that no account will be spared.

We will hear about the specific cuts on October 30. Based on our private meeting last Thursday with the Governor and Assistant Secretary McGuire, we understand cuts ranging from 3% to 5% were being reviewed for this year (9C). These cuts would be devastating.

Please stay involved

We are working with partners on additional activities to document the devastating impact of the cuts. Although we will support broad-based efforts around the budget, we will continue to focus on disabilities (and welcome other disability groups to participate with us). A press release on the impact of FY10 cuts (which we are just now able to get a real sense of) is in the works. We are also talking to partner about planning future activities to ensure these impacts remain in the public eye.



Story and Pictures

Many stories from this week struck me. One was from a parent served by SNCARC/Lifeworks who is in her 70s. She takes care of her two daughters who have intellectual disabilities and cerebral palsy. Her husband is recently disabled. The daughters, twins, require total care and although they have some personal care services, they have lost family support funds which allowed the mother to purchase durable items not provided by Medicaid and respite care.

The pictures in this email include 91-year old Joseph Tehan (active in past with VAC and GBARC) with his sons Stephen (left) and Peter (center) with the goal of speaking with Patrick; and photos of attendees at the vigil this week.