



October 4, 2017

Legislative Finance Committee
Oct. 4, 2017
Exhibit 12

Representative Nancy Balance, Chair
Legislative Finance Committee
Montana State Capitol
1301 E. Sixth Ave.
Helena, Montana 59601

Madam chair and members of the committee,

My name is Mike Mayer. I live in Missoula and serve as the Executive Director of Summit Independent Living. Summit is a private, nonprofit organization headquartered in Missoula with branch offices in Kalispell, Ronan and Hamilton. Our mission is to advance the independence and civil rights of people with disabilities. We provide Medicaid self-directed Community First Choice and Personal Assistance Services as well as HCBS personal assistance, homemaker and respite services to approximately 225 people with disabilities in 7 counties in western Montana. We also provide other independent living services including advocacy assistance, independent living skills training, peer support, information and referral, vocational services, youth transition services, nursing home transition services, and benefits planning & assistance. Overall, we provide services to over 900 people with disabilities annually.

I am adamantly opposed to the proposed cuts. If implemented, they will cause significant and prolonged harm to thousands of Montanans with disabilities, children and older adults – people most in need of Medicaid and other vital services that are essential for their health, welfare, independence and quality of life. My comments are directed primarily at cuts in the Medicaid community service programs administered by the Senior & Long-Term Care Division of DPHHS, but it's clear that proposed cuts in mental health and DD services, protective services, vocational rehabilitation, independent living and youth transition services will have similar devastating consequences. Consider the following list of proposed cuts:

- Eliminate the Medicaid Personal Assistance Services (PAS) program for people with disabilities who need assistance with daily living tasks such as bathing, dressing, transfers, exercise, meal preparation, and household tasks. People on the PAS program do not meet level of care requirements for the Community First Choice program and will go without care. Many people do not need many hours of service each week, but the assistance is essential for their safety and basic health needs. Many have no family members available to assist them, and without care are at significant risk for falls and deteriorating health conditions that will eventually shift costs to more expensive doctor, hospital, and nursing home services. Some may then meet level of care requirements for the Community First Choice and Home & Community Based Service programs, but

states provide services to people with disabilities in the least restrictive setting, and for the majority of people, that means in-home services.

The impact of some of these cuts will drastically reduce our budget at Summit:

- Medicaid Community First Choice & HCBS provider rate cuts – \$135,000
- Eliminate MYTransitions program – \$25,000
- Eliminate the Healthcare for Healthcare Workers program – \$410,000
- Total \$570,000 annually

On top of this, we are still waiting on 3 state contracts for independent living services totaling over \$70,000 that should have been renewed as of July 1 or October 1. The silence from DPHHS and the governor's office has been deafening as we still have no idea if or when the contracts will be forthcoming, let alone what level of funding we may receive.

As a nonprofit organization, there is no way to mitigate this level of cuts short of staff layoffs, closing local offices, restructuring programs, and significantly cutting back services. We are in serious jeopardy of losing 25 years of progress with developing our organizational capacity, programs and services that enable us to provide independent living services to people with disabilities in western Montana. This is not simply a matter of tightening our belts for the next 2 years, this is a matter of survival for our organization.

I am also concerned about the impact of the Medicaid provider reimbursement cuts and other program and service reductions on access to health services such as doctor visits, therapies, dental services, prescription drugs, medical equipment and supplies, mental health services, etc., which will likely lead to further service restrictions, exclusions and loss of provider agencies.

In closing, I strongly urge the legislature and the governor's office to work collaboratively in a special session to find solutions that include additional revenues. Please put politics and ideology aside and find a commonsense, Montana solution to this problem. Do not balance the budget at the expense of those who most need our state's support. We can and must do better than this.

Sincerely,

Mike Mayer

Mike Mayer
Executive Director