

**Background:**

Committee members will discuss advocacy efforts and consider how the Committee and the Council can effectively advocate during the 2013 session of the Texas Legislature. Potential topics of discussion include how members have been involved in the past, when advocacy efforts have been most successful and what support members might desire from TCDD staff and/or other Council members.

**Public Policy Committee****Agenda Item 6.****Expected Action:**

The Committee will discuss advocacy efforts and provide guidance regarding staff activities to support those efforts. No action is anticipated.

**Council Meeting****Agenda Item 15. A.****Expected Action:**

The Council will receive a report of the Committee's discussion on this item. No action is anticipated.

[http://www.elpasotimes.com/opinion/ci\\_16084638](http://www.elpasotimes.com/opinion/ci_16084638).

## Letters: Medicaid challenge

Posted: 09/16/2010 12:00:00 AM MDT

### Medicaid challenge

The State of Texas' budget is a central topic of discussion as the Legislature prepares to go into session in January. Because of an expected and significant deficit, budget cuts that result in cuts in essential services are of particular concern.

Our legislators face a challenging task in determining how to balance the budget, but state leaders must resist temptation to cut programs that have a federal matching share. Moreover, cuts to the Medicaid program should be considered off limits.

Reducing funds for Medicaid would be devastating for individuals with disabilities who need Medicaid assistance to live and work in the community, rather than in institutions. The effects of such cuts would be escalated by the reduction in federal funds that would accompany state cuts.

For every 40 cents Texas invests in Medicaid programs, the state receives 60 cents in matching funds from the federal government.

Conversely, if the state cuts funding by 40 cents, it means that we will lose an additional 60 cents in federal matching funds.

It is therefore paramount that state lawmakers do not make cuts that will result in further revenue loss, particularly when those funds provide critical services that keep individuals in their homes and communities.

Kristen Cox

Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities

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February 2, 2011

Testimony to the Senate Finance Committee on SB 1

Hello Chair Ogden and members of the committee,

My name is Diana Kern and today I am representing myself as a person who lives with a mental illness and NAMI Texas (National Alliance on Mental Illness). I am also speaking on behalf of the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities as a Governor's appointee member until 2015.

The first time I testified before the Senate Finance Committee in the late 90's, I thanked the chair, Senator Bill Ratliff, for investing in my mental health treatment.

After the hearing, Senator Ratliff caught me in the hallway and thanked me for telling my story and told me to continue to speak up. He said that our Legislators need to hear from those of us who have benefitted from the services that our state funds.

I took Senator Ratliff's advice and I am here to testify once again.

If it weren't for our public mental health agency, I would not be where I am today as a functioning member of my community. Because of the necessary treatment that I have received, I am now a homeowner and tax-payer.

My brain disorder is indeed an illness like any other chronic illness. It is through no fault of my own, that I have acquired this lifelong disorder.

Without ongoing treatment, I am unable to live independently and I certainly would not be able to hold down a job.

I consider myself a return on the state's investment.

Throughout the years I have personally experienced the gaps in the system and the lack of continuity of mental health care.

One example of this is when I was unable to get a doctor's appointment for over a month. My symptoms of psychosis were affecting my ability to take care of myself and I ended up being hospitalized.

If I had been able to see a doctor when I needed, I would have not only saved the state money, but my road toward recovery would have been more stable and prevented future crisis from occurring.

When a person with a psychotic disorder is not being treated on a regular basis, their illness becomes progressively worse. I should know. For a period of time, my illness did progress and my needs were greater and the costs were higher.

Two sessions ago, we were very grateful that DSHS received \$82 million for crisis services. This money was well spent and proved to be a good use of government resources.

However, if community mental health centers were sufficiently funded in the first place, our need for crisis services would have been much less.

With an even greater budget shortfall, I am concerned that the gains we have made in our efficient use of the crisis money will all be for naught.

You will undoubtedly see more homeless people in our communities, our jails will continue to be flooded with persons unable to access mental health care, the suicide rate will increase and not only will persons with a serious mental illness suffer, many family members will suffer as well.

As you make these difficult budget decisions, I hope you will remember me and the others in Texas who have benefitted from mental health services. I think we are worth it.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diana Kern". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



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February 2, 2011

To whom it may concern,

My name is Hunter Adkins. I am 29 years old and live in Lakeway, Texas. I have Cerebral Palsy, which affects my motor skills and balance, causing me to be wheelchair bound. The issue I would like to discuss is budget cuts for the Community Living Assistance and Support Services (CLASS) program.

I rely on CLASS to pay for my therapies. I am currently receiving physical therapy, therapeutic horseback riding and massage therapy. I also receive recreational therapy, where I go to the gym or to the pool. These therapies are essential to maintaining my current level of functioning and helping me improve my abilities. For example, they help reduce my high muscle tone, build muscle strength and endurance, improve my balance and maintain joint flexibility. Because of these physical benefits, I am able to help out more with my transfers, I have begun walking short distances for the first time in years and I even stood to dance at a benefit last year!

If you cut the budget by another ten percent, I risk losing the therapies I so desperately need. Without these therapies, my body and my physical abilities will deteriorate. My muscles will become weak and atrophied. I risk losing joint flexibility, which can lead to contractures. My balance would also suffer. I am currently still living with my parents, who, as they get older, will need me to be in top condition and functioning at my best abilities to help them care for me. The total of my service plan for CLASS is \$60,784.40 a year which is far less than the \$197,000 Approximate Annual Average cost of State Supported Living Center services.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter. I cannot stress enough how important the CLASS program is to me, my family and so many others in my position. I would be more than happy to answer any questions or testify in any hearing regarding the potential cuts.

Respectfully,

Hunter Adkins