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Advocates for Californians with Disabilities Urge Increases, Say System is “Falling Apart”

Governor Gavin Newsom released his 2019-20 State Budget, including an estimated \$29.5 billion-dollar surplus. Organizations of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), programs that serve them, regional centers, and their families said that while they are pleased that the Governor’s Budget invests in special education and early childhood developmental screening, they are hopeful that the coming Budget process will result in additional investments to save critical services and supports for 330,000 Californians with IDD and their families.

This year alone, more than 15,000 new individuals with IDD are expected to require services and supports from state-funded programs under the state’s famed “Lanterman Act.” At the same time, the Coalition says direct support staff are quitting the field or working multiple jobs due to poverty level wages; essential programs are closing throughout the state; and individuals are forced to live with inadequate supports or no supports at all. Instead, they say the state should invest to create job training opportunities, community integration programs, parent support, and a valued workforce.

“Let us be clear---our system is in crisis and is falling apart rapidly, and there is a direct impact on people with IDD, their families, and the workforce, which is predominantly non-white women. We hope that Governor Newsom will recognize the need for investment into the IDD community, and especially the importance of this year, specifically,” said Jordan Lindsey, Executive Director of the Arc/UCP Collaboration and head of the Lanterman Coalition.

The Coalition says that in March, the Department of Developmental Services is due to release a rate study that, if honest, should demonstrate massive need and propose comprehensive restructuring of rates and methodologies to ensure California is providing quality and sustainable services and supports to people with IDD. Additionally, the federal government has set a deadline of 2022 for implementation of new guidelines that will call for more community integration of this population, further creation of job opportunities, and require more complex support from the people and programs that support people with IDD.

Lindsey said that “...not one element of this future will be cheaper than what we pay for today.” He continued, “This adds up to a crossroads this year: invest *now* or leave hundreds of thousands of Californians behind and risk losing billions of federal dollars. Therefore, **we urge Governor Newsom and the Legislature to include an eight percent, across-the-board rate increase to our system as a down payment** toward the implementation of that study, to somewhat stabilize the system, and, if nothing else, to simply account for the rising cost of providing services over the last two years alone.”

California has enjoyed a monstrous recovery and the State’s surplus has swelled to unprecedented levels, but Californians with IDD, their families, their direct support staff, and the organizations that coordinate and provide services are struggling. The Coalition says it hopes to engage the Governor and his administration in this vital conversation.