

Chuck Whitman- Speaker # 2

Thank you for coming out today and supporting persons with disabilities. As stated by the Head of Idaho's Department of Health and Welfare, we are in the midst of deciding the future of many of the H and W Medicaid supported programs, based on "Life and Death". I suggest to you today that the services provided to individuals with disabilities funded by Idaho Medicaid is "life and death" for many who now are receiving services.

Over the past year we have seen many financial challenges for providers, delay in payments, wrong payments, increased individual educational requirements for providers to provide services and decrease of allowable charges. Despite these challenges, the concerned and dedicated professionals have continued to provide a wide range of fantastic services to children and adults, thereby helping them to remain in their homes, live independently and continue developing and maintaining their own dignity and achieving life skills. A chance for a future!

As suggested by the State of Idaho to nearly eliminate these services provided now by dedicated professions would be devastating. Many adults and children with disabilities may no longer be able to remain in their homes without dedicated assistance, many may no longer be able to continue their independence and both may become candidates for institutions. Others may fall into our legal system and many others may never have a chance to become independent and realize their special abilities. Turning the clock back a hundred years is not the answer.

I have great empathy for the tough job our Legislatures face as they look for areas to reduce spending, before "just increasing taxes", which many do not want and many cannot afford, but may be the final solution. The Health and Welfare Director is right, prioritize on Life and

Death; but just don't take all the cuts in one aspect of a program budget to salvage special interest. I am sure Grants for energy conservation and Art are important, bicycle path infrastructures, TV Advertising, data collection costs etc. and other programs are also important, but are they "life and death" or even "safety and security". Now during these especially economically challenging times, priorities must be made and I ask and I ask you to ask that our legislatures and departments apply the "life and death" and "safety and security" tests to all the targeted budget cuts, or cut the budget, each line item equally, not targeted for a specific area to pay for the rest. I encourage you to contact your legislature now and be heard. If they would just do equal application of cuts, even 10% to every line item, we would not be here today. Share your opinion and ideas with your representative. Without your input, you will not be represented,

This is YOUR call to action. Now is the time to let your voice be heard. I ask you again to not wait, contact your representative NOW!