

**The Arc-Dane County
Statement for Public Hearing- October 23, 2003**

County Executive Kathleen Falk, County Board Chair Kesterson and the Dane County Board of Supervisors:

My name is Paul Yochum and I am a parent of a daughter with multiple disabilities. In my volunteer life, I am the current President of The Arc-Dane County.

The Arc- Dane County now has a fifty-three (53) year history of advocacy for children and adults with developmental disabilities. We are proud of the work that we have accomplished to help establish community services. We are also grateful for the service system that exists in Dane County. We just recently received a letter from County Executive Kathleen Falk wherein she essentially describes Dane County as second to none in spending per capita in the CIP 1B program. But don't take this away or reduce it year by year! (more on the County Exec's letter below)

Indeed, we must create every effort to fully fund birth to three and beyond. For if we don't take care of the independence end of the spectrum, then what good does it do to get people ready for independence?

Our daughter is a good example! Sara has always worked at something, either around the home by emptying wastebaskets, sorting silverware or folding clothes or at a job in the community. Sara has right side paralysis, along with a cognitive disability, but there are lots of things she can do with one arm/hand. Now 27 years old, Sara does have two part-time jobs and she also volunteers one day a week. But three years ago, Sara was unemployed for a 2-year period. She was not served by an agency that had access to job placement specialists. The money wasn't there! In doing everything that we could to keep Sara's job skills intact, Sara, my wife Marcia and I had to make some adjustments. Yes, Sara had to adjust to regressing back to not feeling like getting up in the morning (and she didn't). She had to forget about on-the-job work habits that had been highly instilled in her for many years. She felt the need to express herself in inappropriate behavior and she did. There was no funding for Sara for daycare services. Oh, yes, Marcia and I did make some adjustments for coming home during the daytime hours to periodically check on Sara and to provide meals. We also stepped up behavior modification techniques so that Sara (and us) could have more productive days.

So you see, when funding services for individuals with disabilities, we must think about and provide funding for, the whole continuum of services.

To that end, we thank County Executive Falk for continuing to provide funding for serving students with developmental disabilities leaving school in 2004. And when we received County Executive Falk's recent letter reallocating another \$150,000 to serve persons with disabilities, we praised her for that! However, this amount doesn't go far enough! We feel that this \$150,000 reallocated amount is no where near enough to allow the continuum of services. We urge the Dane County Executive and the County Board

Supervisors, at a minimum, make adjustments so those individuals in the system do not lose current supports. Without your action, we are concerned that current supports will be cut so drastically, that this precedent will have a catastrophic effect for years to come.

We think that you should be discussing and acting on proposals that enhance the budget's revenue stream! One such item is a "transportation proposal." And while we have mixed feelings about the potential burden that this proposal could have on our lowest paid human services workers, we feel that the proposal is worth considering, if even, for a short-term basis. Of course, any revenue shifted by adopting the "transportation proposal" would need to be returned to the human services budget to offset and/or enhance human services.

A very serious situation exists in our county caused by continued and chronic under-funding of agencies and people on Self-Directed Services (SDS) contracts, as well as outrageous increases in insurance costs. Preliminary analysis of the percent of budget cuts per provider and for Self-Directed Services, show a disproportionate share of the cuts for those individuals self-directing their supports. A total of \$597,349 cut to providers but a \$697,272 cut to those in Self-Directed Services. Plus, children and infants served by agencies, including respite care, are scheduled to be cut by \$104,652! For years, The Arc-Dane County has advocated for these programs and the funding to keep them. In the past we have asked for a 3% raise to be given to these programs but got only a 1 or 2% raise in previous years. Past records indicate that Dane County has given an increase that that equaled inflation only once in the past 12 years for contracts serving people with disabilities once.

In testimony that I gave before the County Board Human Services Committee in September, we asked for consideration of adding an additional \$300,000 to the budget for help with additional health insurance costs for human service workers. The Arc-Dane County even offered to mediate this so that workers would not lose any more of their already too small salary. **Let us work together on resolving these high and outrageous costs that are limiting the capacity to provide quality services. Consider putting back in the budget \$300,000 for funding the health insurance costs for provider agencies.**

We continue to believe that solving the problems related to this budget can and will be worked out to minimize any losses. And we hope that you chose to prioritize services to individuals with disabilities. We welcome the opportunity to work with you on resolving these issues.

Thank you for your time and consideration and thank you for listening!

Paul A. Yochum, President
The Arc-Dane County