

County Executive Kathleen Falk, Chairman Kevin Kesterson, County Board Supervisors, Human Services Director Lynn Green, Committee members, Ladies and Gentlemen.

My name is Ron Johnson and I am President of The Arc-Dane County Board of Directors. We are an advocacy organization serving people with developmental disabilities and their families. We have been providing these services for over 54 years.

My wife Rosemary and I are the Guardians for our son Jeffrey who is a Dane County Resident living in Madison. He has a developmental disability and uncontrolled seizures. Jeffrey is 40 years of age. Over the years I have seen many positive programs that have assisted Jeffrey in obtaining a great amount of independence and helped him to feel part of our community. My concerns for his future and the future of all others with developmental disabilities have been raised with the reductions that have taken place this year and the further reductions that are proposed for 2005.

This year marks the second year in a row that cuts have been recommended. If passed, we would expect to see move of the problems we have seen in 2004, specifically the unresolved issues of the MARC agency closing for three days. I urge county staff, MARC, residential providers and brokers to work out a solution to this problem...we do not want to see 185 people on the street for three cold days in December. So, with unresolved problems facing us as a result of the cuts in 2004, it seems like a bad idea to add to the problem by reducing budgeted money for 2005.

Human Services Director Position

The director has taken a new position for the 2005 budget – she is putting all resources into existing persons currently being served. The result is that there is no money set aside for people on the waiting list as in the past.

Very troubling to us is the elimination of funds for any new or not so new people. There is one group of citizens who are in need of service that are not NEW. These youths with developmental disabilities have been here in Dane County for some time, being served by the schools. They are being eliminated from service at a critical time in their lives! I am speaking about the 2005 graduates.

2005 graduates!

In the late 80s, Dane County started a policy of serving young adults who age out (age 21) of school services and who are working in supported employment by adding these “grads” to the vocational agencies caseload. This policy has continued every year except the 1992 grads. The county’s experience with the 1992 class showed that those individuals were much harder (more expensive) to place after they had sat out for one year. This is a non-mandatory service that our county should continue using a small amount, approximately \$80,000 of levy money with state and federal funds picking up the majority of the cost. The first year of service is less for the county because the grads start at midyear, DVR picks up the first few months, and SDS rates are lower than

traditional rates. Without this program parents will have to sacrifice to provide care for their adult child after high school. To stop these services will waste the efforts of our schools and teachers who have worked to prepare these individuals for transition into the work place. Without these funds the 2005 grads will be placed on a long waiting list, causing them to lose job skills and making it more costly to redevelop these skills at a later time.

Brain Injury Waiver

When there is a serious accident, an injury to the brain can occur. Hospital care is excellent in our county and victims recover quickly to the point where they can leave the hospital. But, at that point the battle is only half over. Recovery of speech, daily living skills and job skills is necessary for people to return to a real life. Funds for rehab and vocational training are available from federal and state sources but a local share (levy dollars) is required. These local funds have been eliminated, thus ending the ability of our county to get state/federal funds that cover the bulk of the rehab costs.

Court Ordered Placements (Olmstead Violation)

Courts have been ordering people with disabilities into community services regularly. When this happens, the county must provide services. **THIS IS A MANDATORY SERVICE.** In the past, Dane County Human Services has set aside an amount of money to cover these mandated services. This year, the Director is relying on funds from those who die to cover the shortfall. If the county refuses to serve a person in this category, they are in clear violation of recent decisions by our state Supreme Court as well as the US Supreme Court decision in the Olmstead Case. It could get interesting a year from now. To say that our Human Services Director has taken a risky position is an understatement.

These proposed changes in policy are not in the county's best interests. Please think about these consequences described above as you prepare to make your decisions about the budget. We are requesting that funds be restored for these groups of people with disabilities, as they have been included in the past.

Thanks for the opportunity to speak.