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Protestors rally in Montgomery hoping to keep mental health funding

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MONTGOMERY - AL - "I never had the experience of being clean and sober until now," Mary Price said.

It's been a year of positive change for Price. Wednesday she celebrated being one year sober.

"It's been a hard year," she said. "I really had to do a lot of praying and just buckle down and work the program. The community programs really helped me a lot to maintain my sobriety this past year."

But soon the former alcohol and prescription pills addict might not have a place to live because of possible budget cuts.

"We have to plan for the worst and we have to act now because we can't wait until October 1," State Mental Health Commissioner, Zelia Baugh, said.

Baugh says the state Mental Health Department is facing 25 percent cuts.

That means about 21,000 people with mental illness will lose outpatient services, 360 people will lose their patient homes and several thousand people dealing with substance abuse, like Price, will no longer receive treatment. Furthermore, 948 jobs would be lost



due to closing four of six hospitals.

"If we cut community services by 25 percent, we do anticipate anywhere between three to five thousand private sector jobs statewide would be lost as a result of those cuts," Baugh said.

Price says if that happens, she doesn't know what she'll do or where she'll go. That's why she's urging decision makers to not cut help to those who need it most.

"[The programs] are of the utmost importance to people," she said. "I know this for a fact."



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