



More than 300 rally in Montgomery, urging legislators not to cut mental health funding

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AP By **The Associated Press**



Mental health advocates rally outside the Alabama Statehouse in Montgomery, on Wednesday, Feb. 22, 2012. Hundreds of advocates and individuals receiving mental health services gathered to raise awareness of key issues and to send a message to lawmakers to not cut mental health funding. (AP Photo/Dave Martin)

MONTGOMERY, Alabama -- More than 300 people have rallied outside of the Alabama Statehouse asking lawmakers not to cut funding to mental health services.

Many of those participating in the rally Wednesday were wearing distinctive red shirts and receive services for alcoholism, mental illnesses or intellectual disabilities from the Department of Mental Health.

The rally took place shortly before House and Senate budget committees heard Mental Health Commissioner Zelia Baugh say that a proposed 25 percent budget cut could cause thousands to lose community mental health services. Baugh said she has proposed closing four existing mental health facilities as a way to keep from eliminating those community services.

At the rally, speakers told stories of holding down jobs and living normal lives despite mental disabilities thanks to community-based mental health programs.

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