

Properly funded programs a must

Inadequate funding represents the most serious threat in our lifetime to Alabama's most vulnerable citizens: people with intellectual/developmental disabilities, mental illness and substance disorders.

Service providers have been told to expect cuts of 25 percent for fiscal 2013. This could literally destroy the mental health service system in Alabama. Thousands of individuals would lose their jobs, millions of dollars in federal Medicaid match money would be lost, and this fragile population would lose community services that keep them out of state hospitals and institutions.

Anything less than level funding for community providers will force many community service providers to close their doors. Will more expensive institutions re-open? How, then, will these citizens of Alabama be served?

Mental health services are an essential part of state government and must be treated as such. Surely we will not give priority to the criminals we have incarcerated, over people with mental health needs.

The governor and legislators should take any action necessary to provide properly funded community programs. Hopefully this can be done by cutting wasteful spending. If not, then Alabama needs to increase revenue so all citizens of Alabama may enjoy the quality of life they so deserve. Already, more than 3,000 families are on the developmental disabilities services waiting list. This number will likely be more than 4,000 within the next year.

Having the lowest taxed state is not something to be proud of, if we fail to provide essential services to our citizens.

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