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LETTER: Cutting essential services harms us all

Published: Tuesday, February 7, 2012 at 3:30 a.m.

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

Service providers have been told to expect cuts of 25 percent for Fiscal Year 13. This could 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 persons 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 that all citizens of Alabama may enjoy the quality of life they so deserve. Already, over 3,000 families are on the developmental disabilities services waiting list. This number will likely be over 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.

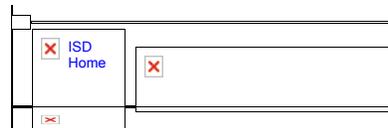
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President

The Arc of Alabama

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