



June 13, 2009

**RE: BUDGET REDUCTIONS
IMPACTING AUTISM COMMUNITY**

As you deliberate the proposed reductions to children, adults, and their families with autism and related disorders, we are writing to you to ask that you consider the following requests and considerations as part of your deliberative process:

1. The Department of Developmental Services (DDS), as mandated by law, has convened a series of meetings with a group of DDS stakeholders to provide advice and input as to where in the system and how the Governor's proposed reductions to programs, supports and system should be made. While DDS has most seriously considered the stakeholder's advice and input on where and how the cuts should be made, the Alliance of California Autism Organizations (ACAO) wishes to go on record stating that ACAO **REJECTS ALL** of the reductions proposed by the Governor to the developmental services system, as well as all other proposed reductions to programs and services that persons and families with autism and related disorders need and require for the provision of a safe, healthy, and productive life. ACAO also wishes to state that as required by law, the responsibility for the final development and submission of proposals to the Legislature to implement the \$100 million in reductions already approved in February as well as the additional proposed \$234 million in reductions proposed in the Governor's May Revise, is that of DDS, and not the members of the DDS Stakeholder group.
2. We believe the DDS Stakeholder process has been extremely valuable. The autism community is very grateful to have been included, and we look forward to future participation in that process. However, at this point in the process, we also believe that movement towards completing the Budget process is moving so fast that we fear that many serious unintended consequences could result from such a mad rush to complete the work in the next few days. Such unintended consequences could likely create real harm to California's autism and developmentally disabled communities. We ask that you consider giving DDS and the DDS Stakeholder process as much time as is possible to review the proposals and the draft trailer bill language implementing the proposals submitted by DDS. The purpose of this request is to help insure that the best decisions are made, and that drafting errors in trailer bill language can be minimized.

Autism Action Network
ASA–Autism Society of America
ASA-CA / Autism Society of California
ASA–Greater Long Beach/San Gabriel Valley Chapter
ASA–Inland Empire Chapter
ASA–Los Angeles Chapter
ASA–San Diego County Chapter
ASA–Santa Barbara Chapter
ASA–San Francisco Bay Area Chapter
ASA–Ventura County Chapter
Autism Awareness Assoc–UC Davis
Autism Education Network
Autism Speaks–Bay Area
Autism Speaks–Los Angeles
Autism Speaks–Orange County
Autism Speaks–San Diego
Autism Speaks–Sacramento
Burlingame Mothers for Special Kids
California Autism Foundation
Educate Advocate
FEAT– Los Angeles
FEAT–Sacramento
FEAT–Fresno-Madera Counties
Friends of Children with Special Needs
Friends of The Bay School
K.E.N. Project
Kaiser Spectrum Kids
LIA Foundation
NAA–National Autism Association
Parents Helping Parents
Sacramento Asperger Syndrome Info & Support
Sacramento BioMed
Schafer Autism Report
Solano FEAT
TACA–Talk About Curing Autism
Unlocking Autism



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3. With all of the DDS proposals we ask that: 1) The proposed reductions in all programs and supports not be permanent, and include sunset language; 2) That you allow for exceptions in order to protect an individual's health and safety; and, 3) That after the enactment of any and all of the DDS proposals, that the impact of the proposals and the implementation of the trailer bill language be assessed and reviewed by the DDS Stakeholder group and the community.

ACAO fully recognizes and appreciates the challenges to the Legislature and Governor in dealing with the most serious Budget crisis in California since the Great Depression, but we wish to express our deepest concern about ANY additional reductions to programs and services that impact our community. Our community-based system has been under assault with serious reductions to programs, services, and supports for many years.

As a result, our system is fragile and cannot withstand new and future cuts while still maintaining California's commitment to persons with disabilities under the Lanterman Act. The commitment must continue to include the right and supports for persons with developmental disabilities to live safe, independent, and productive lives in their communities.

We believe that the final 2009-2010 Budget Agreement approved by the Legislature and Governor must include:

- Revenue increases to offset reductions to services and supports that will seriously and adversely impact Californians with autism and related disorders. Furthermore, every effort should be made as quickly as possible for additional revenues to be explored and made available, and that a portion of those revenues be used to restore and reinstate programs and services that were impacted prior to and during Fiscal Year 2009-2010.
- Decisions that are valued based that result in and ensure and protect the inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities in their communities, and not institutions.
- That all decisions continue to be IPP driven, and to protect the rights of those with developmental disabilities and their families to choice and due process.

Sincerely,

Greg Fletcher
ACAO Representative

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