

From the Desk of Ross O'Banion – Executive Director, Angels Unaware, Inc.
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Legislative Concerns for 2011

In Florida we have the blessing and challenges of a political climate that is changing rapidly. Everyone hopes the changes will stimulate the economy into lasting recovery. But no one knows for sure so, like everyone else, Angels Unaware, Inc. is dealing with the challenges as they come. As the legislature comes back into session we again are aligning with other similar organizations to present a unified legislative platform.

Issue #1 Funding is the key to providing services and support to consumers with Developmental Disabilities. The Medicaid Waiver tier system and the long waiting lists for services are inadequately funded to meet health and safety needs of the consumers.

Solutions:

1. Allow no funding cuts to the already devastated funding system for Developmental Disabilities Medicaid waiver. While the rest of the state over the past 4 to 5 years was getting increases in funding, Developmental Disabilities Medicaid Waiver/APD has suffered cut after cut in funding.
2. Implement the iBudget system as proposed in the 2010 Legislative session, properly funded with fair and equitable rates for providers.
3. Florida should apply for and receive a Federal Grant for a “money follows the person” initiative that is used by other states to fund people who wish to move out of more costly institutional settings and into community settings.

Issue #2 Florida has over 19,000 individual on a waiting list for services from Developmental Disabilities – Home and Community Waiver

Solutions:

1. Create a plan that will reduce the waiting list for services.
2. Work with families on the list to identify needs, and develop and utilize as many forms of community support as possible.
3. Develop projected budgets and timelines for all people on the list.
4. Identify stable and dedicated sources of revenue.

Issue #3 Create opportunities for families to participate in the cost of care for their children exiting High Schools – Exceptional Student Programs.

Solution:

1. Support legislation by Senator T Altman and Rep. C. Ford which creates a savings plan for children with Developmental Disabilities (much like the college pre paid plans) for their care in the years immediately following High School.
2. Support a Memorial bill to the U.S. Congress asking them to support the “The Able Act” which would allow parents to create tax deferred savings accounts to provide funding for disability related services for their children.

Above all, write and call your Governor, state Senator and your Representative weekly and make sure they understand **“NO MORE CUTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED POPULATION OR TO THE PROVIDERS OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY SERVICES.”**

Contact the Florida State Senate at <http://www.flsenate.gov/Senators/Find>

Contact the Florida House of Representatives at

<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/representatives.aspx>