

Theresa Utton

Subject: FW: Proposed Budget cuts

From: Julie Zenel

Sent: Tuesday, August 12, 2014 7:39 PM

Subject: Proposed Budget cuts

Please share with this letter with the Joint Fiscal Committee . I sent this letter to Gov. Shumlin's Administration today:

I am writing to tell you how strongly I oppose your administration's recent request for budget cuts in Medicaid funding for mental health support. I am the parent of a 12 year old child who is not only on the autism spectrum, but also has mental health issues. He has been in treatment since he was four years old, and has come a far way, but still has significant struggles, and will through his adult years. Our family's health and future depends on these crucial services. Did you know that with autism alone it is reported that: The annual cost of autism therapies and treatments can exceed \$40,000 to \$60,000 per year. The lifetime cost to support an individual with autism is greater than \$3.2 million. <http://www.autismaction.org/about-autism/what-is-autism/facts-and-figures/>

As a family, we depend a lot on Medicaid, as well as private insurance to provide what my son needs. Even with that, services are lacking in the Northeast Kingdom and need to be expanded to fully serve children and families.

As a professional in a public school, I see more and more children and families with special and mental health needs. I believe that not adequately addressing those needs now will only cost us more in the long run as a society , as many studies suggest. Please consider cuts to mental health services would be short-sighted at best, disastrous at worst.

Thank you . Julie Zenel, Newport Center , VT 05857