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MEMORANDUM

TO: Commission Members, DDSN Staff, Providers and Advocates

FROM: Beverly A. H. Buscemi, Ph.D.
State Director

RE: More Good News

DATE: March 12, 2010

Yesterday Ways and Means Chairman Dan Cooper and Health Subcommittee Chairman Tracy Edge issued a press release announcing their intent to introduce an amendment during next week's House budget debate that will restore more funding to DDSN. Last Thursday we shared with you Chairman Cooper's announcement of an amendment to restore $22.3 million to DDSN. The two amendments together will restore funding to current service levels, maintaining many essential services.

We are very grateful to Chairman Cooper, Rep. Edge, and many other members of the Ways and Means Committee who have been diligently working to help us. The Committee staff members have been terrific, working closely with DDSN staff.

While this is very good news, we must also be mindful that some individuals and families have lost or will soon lose services important to them as a result of previous funding reductions assigned to the agency between October 2008 and December 2009. Further, South Carolina's economic status is by no means out of the woods. The help we are receiving is not a permanent fix but it does buy us time to explore and implement other budget reducing strategies.

Attached is Reps. Cooper's and Edge's press release. I know many of you contacted your legislators previously to express your concern. Please spend an equal amount of time to personally thank them for their help and support.

Attachment

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Saleeby Center - Phone: 843/332-4104

Representative Daniel T. "Dan" Cooper
Representative Tracy R. Edge
SOUTH CAROLINA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 11, 2010

Contact: Paul Patrick
(803) 734-3144
paulpatrick@schouse.gov

Chairman Cooper and Rep. Edge Respond to Proposed Budget Cuts

Amendment to be offered to help restore proposed cuts

(Columbia, SC) - Yesterday afternoon the United States Senate approved the *American Workers, State, and Business Relief Act of 2010*, HR 4213. Among other things, this bill, extends for an additional six months (ending June 20, 2011) the enhanced Medicaid (FMAP) match rate provided to states. Understanding that the timing of this Bill is still uncertain, the fact that the United States House of Representatives has already passed similar language leads us to believe the extension will become law.

As such, next week we will propose an amendment to the State's budget that will use this additional funding to help restore proposed cuts to the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, Department of Mental Health, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, and other critical needs of state government. While this additional federal funding is welcomed relief for many South Carolinians who are facing reductions to services, it should be noted that this extension is only for six additional months. The difficult decisions we were set to face next week will still need to be made.

Chairman Cooper agrees that while this provision certainly does help in the short run, the tough choices do not go away. "We need to utilize this six month extension to continue planning for next year when the match rate will revert back to former levels."

Those thoughts are echoed by Rep. Edge. "We worked very hard this year to fund core services, and we will continue to do everything we can to protect those that need the most protection. However, this provision is not endless and next year is the real challenge."

The full South Carolina House of Representatives will begin budget deliberations Monday March 15, 2010 at 1:00 PM.

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