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MEMORANDUM

TO: Commission Members, DDSN Staff, Providers and Advocates

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

RE: Ways and Means Budget Update

DATE: March 4, 2010

Everyone is aware of the Ways and Means budget recommendation and the far-reaching impact to services. The Commission and I sent a letter last Friday to Chairman Dan Cooper and the other committee members to explain the problem. I, along with other DDSN staff, participated in a lengthy and very positive meeting with Ways and Means Committee staff on Monday. We continued to communicate and work with these staff members and Representative Tracy Edge, our subcommittee chairman.

Late yesterday Chairman Cooper issued the following statement regarding potential cuts to the South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (DDSN):

"During the budget writing process there was a breakdown in communication that balances federal requirements, federal Medicaid match rates, and state funds. As a result some of the funds designed to offset the reductions to DDSN were potentially jeopardized. However, we have only completed the first steps in what is a lengthy and deliberative budget process. This process is intentionally designed to have numerous steps to allow input and address problems or concerns. As such, I plan on offering an amendment when the budget is debated on the House floor that will redirect $22.3 million of state funds to DDSN that can be used as their state match. This amendment will go a long way in ensuring the federal draw down."

This is a huge and important first step toward resolving the $47 million budget problem. While there still remains a good way to go, we are very, very grateful to Chairman Cooper, his staff and Representative Edge for their commitment and leadership to find different ways to continue essential services people are receiving today. We appreciate their leadership, and we will continue to work closely with them throughout the lengthy budget process to address the remaining $24.7 million shortfall.

Thank you for your role as advocates and for educating others on the importance of the vital services you or your family receives or your agency provides.

A unified approach is necessary to accomplish our goal. Legislators, DDSN, service providers and advocates must continue to work together.

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