

# MetroWest

Center for Independent Living, Inc.

## Budget Fun (*not!*)

Dear Paul,

Governor Patrick's FY '12 budget is out, and it is not pretty. While we understand that revenues are down, the cuts show a puzzling disregard for people with disabilities. Proposed is a decrease of \$7.5 million from FY 2011 for HHS (Health and Human Services), and \$25 million from the DDS (Department of Developmental Services) budget. The next step is for the House to discuss and modify the proposal, along with the Senate. *NOW* is the time to contact your legislators with all of your opinions on these cuts, as well as your approval of programs which were not cut.

MWCIL is most alarmed with the \$550,000 (or 12%) proposed reduction to the Centers for Independent Living statewide budget. And be aware that many other services for people with disabilities are facing cuts, including the MA Commission for the Blind and the MA Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. On February 4, MWCIL and the Easter Seals hosted a Legislators Forum, and began a conversation with some MetroWest legislators. Read about this important event below.

There is some good news - the PCA program is not currently on the chopping block. MWCIL staff attended the PCA Rally at the State House on January 14 (story below). But, things change quickly so be prepared to defend the importance of keeping it fully funded.

What can you do? Contact your elected officials (see guidelines below) with your story. And MWCIL will try and keep you informed about any Advocacy Actions taking place in Boston and MetroWest. Stay informed and share your opinions!

from Paul Spooner, Executive Director

### Line Item: \$807,000 Cut at MRC

The governor has proposed an \$807,000 cut to the "4120-4000" account of MRC - Mass Rehabilitation Commission.

- \$550,000 (or 12%) cut to Independent Living Services statewide. There are 11 Centers for Independent Living across MA. Statewide, Centers for Independent Living served 18,351 people with disabilities in 2010. MWCIL serves around 300 consumers. Most traditional services for people with disabilities have very specific and stringent rules about exactly who is eligible, and exactly what is offered. Not everyone fits into these categories. Centers for



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### MA Annual Independent Living Education Day at the State House

Monday, March 14, 2011  
from 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
at Great Hall in the State House.

Sponsored by the MA Statewide Independent Living Council.

Please join us to educate

Independent Living work with people who have difficulty navigating the rules and services and who otherwise can fall through the cracks. This is why Centers for Independent Living work to get people out of nursing homes and institutions and into community based homes. So, if MWCIL loses 12% of our funding and 12% of our capacity to work with people, which 12 % or 35 consumers should we turn away?? Statewide, which 12% or 2,200 consumers should be left to their own devices? Of the approximately 250 people statewide who are sprung from nursing homes, which 30 should we leave behind?

- \$257,000 more is included in the overall \$807,000 Independent Living cut. Other items which may be affected include Assistive Technology, Supportive Living and other Community Services. Easter Seals administers the Assistive Technology program. In 2010, they helped approximately 150 people at an average cost of \$3000.

If you or anyone close to you has been helped to become more independent by an Independent Living Center, or with Easter Seals Assistive Technology, PLEASE tell your story to your legislator or contact us at MWCIL ([email](#)), and we will work with you to get your message through.

A Public Hearing on MRC's budget is scheduled for February 23, 2011 at 10 a.m. at the Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School in Fitchburg.

## Centers for Independent Living in MA: The Facts

The 11 Centers for Independent Living in MA served 18,351 people with disabilities in 2010. In addition, CIL advocacy has enriched the quality of life for over 1 million people with disabilities in MA by improving public transportation, health care, services and ADA compliance, which has helped people become productive, self-sufficient members of our communities.

- Centers for Independent Living answered over 10,000 calls about PCAs, home care, Social Security, ADA, accessible transportation, Medicaid and more.
- Centers for Independent Living helped 192 people of various ages move from nursing homes to the community. Another 183 are in the process of moving. Each move saves the state a significant amount of money, and greatly improves each individual's quality of life.
- Centers for Independent Living assisted hundreds of people to find jobs by working closely with vocational rehabilitation programs and career centers.
- Centers for Independent Living helped hundreds of people, from Boston to the Berkshires, find affordable and accessible (and scarce!) housing.
- Centers for Independent Living employ over 190 people with disabilities.

12% or \$550,000 in cuts to these services - Do the math... and

your legislators on the priorities and importance of Independent Living.

Call your legislator today and set up a time to visit them between 12 and 3. Tell them your story.

For more information, or to be a part of the MWCIL "delegation", contact us at 508-875-7853 or email us at [info@mwCIL.org](mailto:info@mwCIL.org) by March 7.

## \$\$\$ Fundraising \$\$\$

MWCIL always welcomes donations. All funds are used to improve our ability to provide services to our consumers.

## Accessible Sports and Recreation

The [Adaptive Sports and Recreation Program](#) in Sudbury offers year round recreation and leisure opportunities to community members of all ages and abilities. There are over 20 programs (some indoor, some outdoor) running this winter. All of the programs that Anna Wood (recreational therapist) runs are open for people from any community.

Don't forget about the state's Department of Conservation and Recreation's [Outdoor Recreation Program](#). Their activities are scheduled all over the state. Scroll down to see their whole schedule of adaptive and accessible activities.

then remember that this money affects many people's *basic lives* - their home, transportation, work, community and more. Don't let MA go backwards, and leave more people with disabilities locked up in nursing homes, and without the ability to live a dignified life. And don't make our communities less rich by locking away people with disabilities!

PLEASE restore full funding to line item 4120-4000.

## State Budget Process

The first step in the annual budgeting process, the Governor's Budget, was released in January. This budget now goes to the House (via the House Ways and Means Committee). Ways and Means will hold hearings and discussions, sometimes including the Senate, and reissue their own version of the budget in early April. In other words, between now and April is an important time for citizens to let their legislators know of any problems with the Patrick budget, and also let them know which existing programs are important to them. (After this, the Senate will come up with their own changes, and the two legislative branches will then come up with a combined budget. The combined budget goes back to the governor by July 31. Governor Patrick has 10 days to veto any line items.) But for now, let's concentrate on the Governor's Budget and see if we can get it right!

## Effective Advocacy

Find your legislators at [www.WhereDoIVoteMA.com](http://www.WhereDoIVoteMA.com).

Ways to communicate:

- Personal contact is easier than you think. Most of our legislators visit our communities and are anxious to talk to their constituents. You also may be able to schedule a visit to their office.
- Handwritten letters are a very effective way to make sure your message is understood. In today's digital world, a handwritten letter will stand out.
- Phone calls and emails are quick and easy ways to contact your legislator.
- Letters to the Editor, and discussing your issues with your friends and neighbors can also bring additional support to your cause.
- Join political groups and/or attend rallies. More people mean a louder voice. Make sure your legislators know the rally is occurring, and that you attended.

What to say:

- Tell the legislator that you are a constituent. Typically you should provide your name, address and contact information.
- Identify the issue which you are advocating for or against. Be very clear.
- **Tell your story.** *You are the expert!* How does this program help you? How could this budget cut hurt you? *Why do you care? Why should the legislator care?*

## MA PCAs

Personal Care Attendants are at the heart of the Independent Living Movement. By performing and helping with Activities of Daily Living and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living that not everyone can do on their own, PCA's give people with disabilities the freedom to work, to play, to live in the community and home of their choice, and to be independent.

MWCIL has partnered with other organizations and created the [PCAForever](http://PCAForever) website devoted to providing information about the Massachusetts PCA program as well as publicizing advocacy opportunities and needs.

The governor's budget has left the PCA program level-funded, however, there are many more cycles to go through before the budget is finalized. Please contact us with your situation so we can put *real stories about real people* on our website, and ensure that our legislators understand how important the PCA program is.

[Email us](#)

## Emergency Preparedness

Visit our new [Emergency Preparedness web page](#) at [mwcil.org](http://mwcil.org) for online resources.

Anyone who has life-dependent power needs or other medical requirements

## FAQ:

1. Is it worthwhile to speak with a staff member instead of my legislator? Yes, but ask for the staff member who specializes in your particular topic instead of the person who answers the phone.
2. Where can I find information about disability issues? Many of your favorite organizations have newsletters with advance notice about rallies, and ongoing updates on budgeting. MWCIL has several Advocacy web links on our [Resources page](#).

## One Person's Story

MWCIL does outreach at nursing homes in our MetroWest area by presenting social workers and nursing home staff with the facts about Independent Living services. The staff then contacts MWCIL when they find out that a resident would like to leave the nursing home to live more independently. Here is the story of one woman who has happily left a local nursing home.

"Lisa" was 47 years old when she fell and injured her spinal cord. She also lives with diabetes and high blood pressure. After some recovery, the hospital discharged her to a nursing home. While there, she lost her apartment and all hope of returning to the community.

Eight long years later, she was referred by her social worker to MWCIL as a person who wanted to leave the nursing home. First, MWCIL worked with Lisa to find her housing. Once housing was secured, she next needed transition funds, PCA services and transportation services to make the move realistic. MWCIL continued to work with Lisa after her move when SSDI hit a snag. MWCIL advocated with Lisa's landlord and other service providers to be patient with reimbursement, and eventually her social security benefits were corrected.

Today, at age 55, Lisa lives independently in her own apartment with PCA services. She navigates around her community, has made many new friends, manages her finances, and takes better care of herself. Today, Lisa is smiling.

What did MWCIL do? They listened to Lisa and found a way for her to return to *living on her own terms*. MWCIL is experienced with the complex rules and regulations of housing, social security, PCA services, transportation, MassHealth and more. Equally as important, MWCIL is also experienced in the *abilities* of people with disabilities, and how capable a motivated person can become. Everyone deserves the chance to live outside of institutions, and inside a community.

## PCA Rally at the State House

On January 19, people with disabilities, personal care attendants and independent living

should register at their Town Hall with the Civil Defense Emergency Preparedness staff.

Make sure that you have extra food on hand, that you have back-up plans for services and medical needs, and that your friends and family can easily get in touch with you. Track down emergency numbers and put them in a visible, easily found location. Prepare!

## Fuel Assistance

Cold Relief  
Hotline: 1- 800 -  
632 - 8175

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program assists low-income individuals and families with the cost of heating their homes during the winter season. Visit the MA Housing and Economic Development's [Cold Relief Information page](#) for details.

## Charlie Cards for MetroWest



MetroWest Regional Transit Authority will now accept Charlie Cards. Customers can add stored card value at all ticket machines and through the [MBTA website](#).

## About Us:

[MWCIL website](#)  
(past issues are available at our website)

advocates all gathered at the State House in support of the MA PCA program. Bill Henning of BCIL (Boston Center for Independent Living) spoke, as well as several consumers and PCA's. The crowd of about 150 attempted to speak to Governor Patrick, Speaker DeLeo and Senate President Therese Murray, but instead had to rely on office staff to relay the messages. Many advocates visited their own senator and representative.



## Legislators Forum

On February 4, state legislators gathered at MWCIL for a discussion with MWCIL and Easter Seals. In attendance were State Representatives Tom Sannicandro, Dave Linsky, Carolyn Dykema and Chris Walsh. State Senators James Eldridge and Karen Spilka also attended. Joe Bellil, Kirk



Mary and Joe Bellil

Joslin and Joan Morris from Easter Seals came, as well as Ed Carr who is the MW Regional Transit Authority Administrator. (Both Joe and Ed are also on the board of MWCIL.) The focus of the meeting was to remind and/or teach our legislators how important Independent Living and Assistive Technology are to residents with disabilities in MA. One consumer, Mary, spoke of her experiences. On the chopping block is \$850,000 to both the state IL centers and Assistive Technology. These service budgets are already so small that the cuts would be devastating. Also, many of our consumers are not eligible for many services and would otherwise fall through the cracks. The legislators seemed understanding, and spoke of the need for advocacy to protect human services.

The legislators spoke of the extreme nature of this year's budget. First, with the recession continuing, level funding and cuts will be on the table. Second, many of the new House members came in on a

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local aid platform, so local aid will be their priority. The MA Independent Living Education Day will critical to teaching the new members about Centers for Independent Living. These new legislators will also need to learn about the ADA and disability laws, and human services. All of the legislators agreed that personal stories from their constituents will have the most impact on forming their opinions.



MWCIL Executive Director Paul Spooner, Senator Karen Spilka and Senator James Eldridge

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