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STATE BUDGET A DEMONSTRATION OF WHO IS VALUED & DEVALUED
Needs of Pennsylvanians with intellectual disabilities go unmet in Governor's budget plan

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HARRISBURG (PA): The Arc of Pennsylvania reacted today with strong disappointment to Governor Ed Rendell's proposed fiscal year 2009-10 budget proposal. Pennsylvanians with intellectual & developmental disabilities and their families are arguably the one population that counts on state government the most, yet when it comes to the two most important programs on which they rely, the budget all but ignores them.

For the second year in a row, special education takes a hit compared to basic education funding. In the budget unveiled on February 4th, Governor Rendell proposes a zero (0) increase in state funding for special education. In contrast, the basic education subsidy (for students *without* disabilities) includes a 5.7% increase, or \$300 million in new state spending. "My son has Down syndrome and relies on special education—with this budget, the Governor is telling me my son isn't important", said MJ Bartelmay, President of The Arc of Pennsylvania and father of young MJ Bartelmay III. This year's budget follows up a similarly bad budget from last year. The budget in FY08-09 included only a 1.7% increase for special education, while basic education received 5.5%. "It's a stark disparity between programs serving kids with and without disabilities", Bartelmay continued. "It's almost as if the Governor is saying there's no reason to invest in special education because 'those' students aren't worth it", Bartelmay concluded.

For adults with intellectual disabilities, the Governor's budget is equally bad. According to state government's own statewide figures, 4,568 adults with intellectual disabilities are on the "emergency" need waiting list and another 9,733 on the "critical" waiting list. In spite of the dire needs of these Pennsylvanians, the Governor's budget includes only \$15.1 million to serve 293 adults from the waiting list and another 500 young people transitioning from special education into adult life. Members of The Arc understand the fiscal challenges faced by state government but are very concerned with the Governor's priorities. During times when revenue to state government is dwindling, policy makers should focus on basic needs before spending on new "wants"—meeting the needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities is a core responsibility of state government. "The Governor found money to give to parents to send their adult sons and daughters to college, but the Governor chose not to help thousands of parents with adult children at home who have mental retardation and are desperate for services", said Steve Suroviec, Executive Director, The Arc of Pennsylvania. "There is new money to help able-bodied adults pay their health insurance bills, but thousands of adults with mental retardation on the emergency waiting list will get nothing—it says a lot about who is valued and devalued in our society", concluded Suroviec.

The Arc of PA is also concerned that providers of services will not receive a rate increase in this budget to offset inflation. Providers of mental retardation services are 100% publicly funded, and so when state government fails to provide a rate increase, service agencies are forced to cut-back, usually resulting in layoffs and a worsening of the waiting list problem.

To get waiting list numbers by county, go to the PA Waiting List Campaign website at the following link: http://www.pawaitinglistcampaign.org/WL_County.html. To view a 4-minute video about one family on the waiting list, click the following link: http://www.pawaitinglistcampaign.org/wl_families2.html.

The Arc works to include all children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in every community. There are 35 local chapters of The Arc in Pennsylvania covering 47 counties. The Arc of Pennsylvania is affiliated with The Arc of the U.S.