

Educate. Advocate.

Educating ourselves as parents and caregivers so we can better Advocate for our children with special needs.

January 7, 2011

Dear Governor Brown,

After you were elected to the office of Governor by the people of California you asked us to submit ideas for reducing our great deficit. I did so and would like to now expand upon some of these ideas. Educate.Advocate. is a group in Southern California concerned with educating ourselves as parents and caregivers so we can better advocate for our children with special needs. We believe that cuts to expenditures must indeed be made, and that we have identified significant cuts which can be made without harming our children.

The state of California is the only state to have set up for special education a SELPA system. SELPA stands for Special Education Local Plan Area. SELPAs were intended to allow several small school districts to combine their special education resources to save money. What most SELPAs have become is a clearing house to strategize against special education students in due process hearings. SELPAs adorn themselves with services such as counseling to students and training to their school districts, but even those are often very expensive workshops put on by attorneys to teach them how to litigate against parents, which has become their core mission. Special education children are not represented in a SELPA system in any meaningful way, because the SELPAs are run by unelected superintendents from each school district.

The result is to further enable the institutional drive of the education industry to deprive students of services and push them out to fail in society - saving the districts money in the short term, but only by imposing on society far more expensive externalities such as more prison inmates, lost tax revenue, and other expensive alternatives to holding the education industry responsible to begin with. And since the society on which the education industry is now invited to dump these problems is where the districts must get their support, they're ultimately being encouraged to hurt themselves by poisoning their own well.

Hence, we could save a lot of money by eliminating the entire SELPA bureaucracy throughout the state of California and exploring ways that other states use to gain the economies of scale which the SELPAs provide, while preventing a lot of the harm being done to special education children today. The education industry will wail if you are resolute, but it will be for its own good if you stay firm. We just can't afford to indulge their self-serving conduct and bureaucratic bloat any longer.

Another way the state of California is unique is the regional center system. We have 21 regional centers throughout this state. Newspapers like the Sacramento Bee have recently been documenting the tremendous amount of fraud, waste, and abuse now prevalent in the system,

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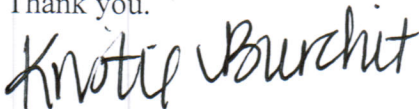
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with no transparency and no true oversight. Your administration could save a lot of money and return power in the system to parents, caregivers, and the consumers themselves by implementing the Individual Choice Budget. An analysis by the Individual Choice Budget workgroup completed in April 2010 documents that this reform will save the state a large amount of money over the present system. This is a second instance, quite parallel to the SELPA problem, in which eliminating an oppressive and self-serving bureaucracy can actually save money.

Lastly, the Superior Court of California issued a verdict this week that the Department of Managed Healthcare (DMHC) wrongfully put out a memo on autism in March of 2009 without public hearings. The DMHC has a history since early 2009 of referring all ABA (Applied Behavioral Analysis) cases to the in house attorneys and considering all claims as grievances rather than submitting them for an IMR (Independent Medical Review) by independent physicians. Here they can sit as a grievance with a group of attorneys, at the word of the director of DMHC, indefinitely! I hope your administration will look into this immediately and appoint someone to DMHC who looks out for the people of California rather than saving insurance companies money at the expense of the state and people of California, while seeking a legislative remedy to ensure that this happens no more. What kind of sense does it make for DMHC to shield the insurance companies in this way, compelling parents instead to look to state and local agencies for services that should be getting paid by their insurers? California and its people need the money more than the insurance companies do.

I thank you for your time and I hope you will consider what our group of parents of children with special needs has to say prior to releasing your budget this next week.

Thank you.



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<http://educateadvocateca.com>