



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Different Governor, Same Game Being Played in Springfield

Less fortunate are political pawns in budget crisis

(Dixon, IL)

It's a horrible case of déjà vu. The state of Illinois has a new governor, but the same game is apparently being played when it comes to the budget crisis, making pawns of those who are most vulnerable in our communities.

"Once again, clients of agencies like Sinnissippi Centers are being held hostage as bargaining chips as their services are threatened with cuts. It's all part of a game of political brinkmanship we have seen too many times," says Patrick Phelan, Sinnissippi Centers' President/CEO. "Threatening cuts in services that benefit the most vulnerable citizens is a tactic that has been used often in the past to force lawmakers to make compromises on the budget without really solving the budget crisis," adds Phelan.

"A new plan is desperately needed to not only solve the state's budget woes but to also ensure that those who need services receive them," says Phelan. "We need new solutions, a new paradigm, not the same old same old."

"That solution is creating a system of integrated, coordinated care with our partners in primary healthcare. This model has been proven to not only improve lives but to save money in Illinois and other states where it has been tried. It's time to try it statewide. It will take a shift in thinking and cooperation and input of many of those who are most affected." Phelan says, "To truly cut long-term costs, providers like Sinnissippi, need to be at the table in crafting an improved behavioral health system. However, the annual budget drama has derailed any chances at creating real systemic improvements."

"Unfortunately, we have seen a repeat of the same process with the current year's state budget," says Phelan. Many rumors circulated that suggested significant cuts were coming to agencies like Sinnissippi Centers due to a shortfall in 2015 appropriations for Mental Health and other state funded services.

Then lawmakers passed legislation, which was signed by the Governor, which provided an additional \$45.23 million to fill these budget gaps. These bills included only 2.25% decreases for many service lines.

Then, in an apparent 180 degree turn, on Good Friday, the Governor cut many state programs most thought were protected in the bills that were passed. Included in those cuts were services Sinnissippi clients utilize, and programs administered by our partners. Then, very recently, another bill out of the legislature was signed into law, allowing the Governor to reinstate the Good Friday cuts to the tune of \$26 million. Currently, the Governor's budget would cut over \$1 million in funding to Sinnissippi Centers for Fiscal Year 2016, which begins July 1st.



Once again, Governor Rauner is threatening to cut funding to those who can least afford to be without services. Areas of impact would be psychiatric services, crisis services, substance abuse counseling, and counseling for the uninsured. Thousands would lose a portion of, or all, of their services.

If the Fiscal 2016 cuts are made as proposed now, not only will there be a toll in human life and misery, but dramatic increases in costs for emergency medical care and/or incarceration.

“We recognize the fiscal challenges in Illinois, and don’t expect we will avoid cuts completely,” says Phelan. “In this process, we would like to see a reduction in the loss of service to our clients from the Governor’s budget”.

“Our clients have been pawns in the political process far too long,” says Phelan. “Their services are held hostage as a bargaining chip to arrive at other political compromises. It is time to stop harming the real people of our state, especially those who are the least able to absorb these impacts.”

Sinnissippi Centers is a behavioral healthcare agency serving Carroll, Lee, Ogle and Whiteside Counties and provides substance abuse screening and treatment services.

For more information about programs and services, call Sinnissippi toll-free at 1-800-242-7642. Sinnissippi has office locations in Dixon, Mt. Carroll, Oregon, Rochelle and Sterling.

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