



Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

Department of Human Services
Addictions and Mental Health Division
500 Summer Street NE E86
Salem, OR 97301-1118
Voice 503-945-5763
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July 28, 2009

David W. Oaks
Executive Director
MindFreedom International
454 Willamette, Suite 216 – POB 11284
Eugene, OR 97440-3484

Dear David:

Thank you for your email. Your dedication to empowering consumers is inspiring and I know this issue is critically important to you and Oregon's consumer movement. AMH shares your commitment to empowering consumers and to the establishment of an Office of Consumer Affairs. However, this will not happen without additional resources from the Legislature.

In my letter, I was talking in general about the base budget from 2007-2009 versus proposed cuts for 2009-2011. The final budget that passed the legislature kept funding intact for the programs and services that directly support people with addictions or mental illness. The only direct program cut was to supported employment. Despite the big loss in state revenue, this is a much more positive result than we had expected at the beginning of session.

That doesn't mean that the budget meets the needs of Oregonians. The Agency Request Budget that DHS provided to the Governor last summer reflects the investments that Oregon needs to make in the addictions and mental health system. This budget included the funding for an Office of Consumer Affairs, an ombudsman and additional community services.

As you know, AMH has supported restoration of the Office of Consumer Affairs every budget cycle since the program was cut in the last round of budget cuts in 2003. AMH fully supports this concept and we will continue to do so. It is unfortunate that the proposal has not made it through the next steps of the process. But the decision not to fund this program was not made by AMH.

If you need this letter in alternate format, please call 503-945-5763 (Voice) or 800-375-2863 (TTY)

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HSS1601 (11/06)

David Oaks
July 28, 2009
Page 2

Even without additional financial resources from the Legislature, AMH has prioritized peer-delivered services. In a recent 2009-2011 work planning session the AMH management team prioritized peer-delivered services. We will be looking at ways to support peer-run programs and increase reimbursement for these programs. As the peer service work plan is more fully developed, it will be shared with consumer groups for feedback.

AMH wants to work with you and others to obtain the necessary support from key legislators, the Governor, stakeholders and other advocates in championing this cause. Without champions in the legislature and the Governor, the possibility of getting this program restored is doubtful. AMH cannot be the sole "official" entity advocating for this concept. I look forward to working you on this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Richard L. Harris
Interim Assistant Director

RH:jr