

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE HEARING

STATE CAPITOL
MAJORITY CAUCUS ROOM
ROOM 140
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

FRIDAY, MAY 22, 2009
1:00 P.M.

PRESENTATION ON SENATE BILL 850

PANEL 8 OF 15

BEFORE:

HONORABLE DWIGHT EVANS, MAJORITY CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE MATTHEW D. BRADFORD
HONORABLE WILLIAM C. KORTZ III
HONORABLE DEBERAH KULA
HONORABLE BRYAN R. LENTZ
HONORABLE TIM MAHONEY
HONORABLE JOSH SHAPIRO
HONORABLE MATTHEW SMITH
HONORABLE MARIO J. CIVERA, JR., MINORITY CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE GORDON DENLINGER
HONORABLE JOHN R. EVANS
HONORABLE MAUREE GINGRICH
HONORABLE DAVID R. MILLARD
HONORABLE RON MILLER
HONORABLE DOUGLAS G. REICHLEY
HONORABLE RICHARD R. STEVENSON

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

HONORABLE KEVIN P. MURPHY

JEAN DAVIS REPORTING

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ALSO PRESENT:
MIRIAM A. FOX
MAJORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
EDWARD J. NOLAN
MINORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DEBRA B. MILLER
REPORTER

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I N D E X
TESTIFIERS

<u>NAME</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
KRISTIN AHRENS INSTITUTE ON DISABILITIES AT TEMPLE UNIVERSITY, PENNSYLVANIA'S UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES.....	4, 5
DANIEL A. TORISKY PRESIDENT, PA CHAPTER OF THE AUTISM SOCIETY OF AMERICA (ASA).....	4, 10
RACHEL BROOKS MEMBER OF THE VOLUNTEER BOARD ADVISING BUREAU OF AUTISM SERVICES.....	5, 11
DAVID KRAIN SOCIAL WORKER, DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES, PHILADELPHIA.....	5, 18
LINDA ANTHONY POLICY DIRECTOR, DISABILITY RIGHTS NETWORK OF PA (DRN).....	5, 19

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 * * *

3 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: I would like to
4 reconvene the House Appropriations Committee meeting,
5 the hour being 1 o'clock.

6 What I would like to do is say good
7 afternoon to all of you.

8 And basically what I would like to do, you
9 can go down and introduce yourself for the purpose of
10 the stenographer, for the record, because what we do
11 is we share that information with the Members of the
12 committee as well as the Members of the House.

13 That's what I intend to do, to share this testimony.

14 And what we are doing is we are asking you
15 to testify on Senate Bill 850. We are asking you to
16 testify.

17 So can you introduce yourself for the
18 purpose of the record and then we'll start.

19 MS. AHRENS: Hi, and good afternoon.
20 I'm Kristin Ahrens from the Institute on Disabilities
21 at Temple University.

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Okay; sure.

23 MR. TORISKY: Dan Torisky, head of the
24 Autism Society of Pennsylvania and Pittsburgh, and a
25 former President of the Autism Society of America.

1 MS. BROOKS: Rachel Brooks, a member of the
2 Volunteer Board that advises the Bureau of Autism
3 Services.

4 MR. KRAIN: My name is David Krain, and I'm
5 a social worker with the Department of Human Services
6 in Philadelphia.

7 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Okay.

8 Yes?

9 MS. ANTHONY: And my name is Linda Anthony.
10 I'm the Policy Director for the Disability Rights
11 Network of Pennsylvania.

12 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Okay; sure.

13 We'll start with you.

14 MS. AHRENS: So good afternoon again. Thank
15 you for the opportunity to testify regarding Senate
16 Bill 850.

17 My name is Kristin Ahrens. I'm with the
18 Institute on Disabilities at Temple University,
19 Pennsylvania's University Center for Excellence and
20 Developmental Disabilities.

21 The Institute on Disabilities supports the
22 core function of government to ensure that the
23 dignity and rights of all citizens are protected and
24 honored. Fulfillment of this critical goal involves
25 supporting activities that allow all people to

1 participate in communities as equal members.

2 Our mission is to lead---

3 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Why don't you hold
4 for one second. Let me see what's going on. I'm
5 just curious what's happening.

6 (Band playing in Capitol rotunda.)

7 MS. AHRENS: I brought my band.

8 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: You brought your
9 band. I was going to say you brought your band.

10 MS. AHRENS: I brought my band, yes.

11 They're a little off tempo for my speech,
12 but---

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Sure; sure. Go
14 ahead.

15 MS. AHRENS: All right.

16 So our mission at the institute is to lead
17 by example, creating connections and promoting
18 networks within and among communities so that people
19 with disabilities are recognized as integral to the
20 fabric of community life.

21 SB 850 undermines this key duty of
22 government and the institute's ability to provide
23 supports critical to accomplishing this objective.

24 I will speak to the impact of SB 850
25 specifically on older Pennsylvanians and

1 Pennsylvanians with disabilities who have assistive
2 technology needs.

3 Assistive technology, which I'll refer to as
4 "AT," means items which help people do the things
5 they need and want to do to learn, work, and live as
6 independently and productively as possible.

7 AT can be as complex as a computer operated
8 by eye-gaze or as simple as a reacher sold at Walmart
9 for picking things up without bending. AT devices
10 are not luxuries but essential tools.

11 As you are aware, there are 2.3 million
12 people with disabilities and older persons living
13 in Pennsylvania today, many of whom can benefit from
14 AT.

15 Learning about the assistive technology that
16 can help, making good decisions among commercially
17 available items and obtaining funding for some items,
18 can be challenging.

19 To meet the assistive technology needs of
20 our citizens, the State has historically funded two
21 programs -- Pennsylvania's Assistive Technology
22 Lending Library and Pennsylvania's Assistive
23 Technology Foundation.

24 SB 850 zeroed out funding for these
25 programs.

1 The AT Lending Library functions to provide
2 for the State short-term equipment loans, a "try
3 before you buy" model.

4 The Library includes an inventory of
5 thousands of items, including hearing devices, vision
6 aids, communications devices, and adaptive computer
7 equipment.

8 More than 4,400 people, all ages, all
9 disabilities, from across the State borrowed devices
10 this last fiscal year.

11 The program is coordinated by the Institute
12 on Disabilities and relies on a centralized inventory
13 managed by the Hiram G. Andrews and nine regional
14 Assistive Technology Resource Centers, all staffed by
15 knowledgeable people. Devices are shipped at no cost
16 to borrowers.

17 Without the opportunity to try devices
18 before purchase, public systems may purchase
19 equipment that doesn't meet a person's need,
20 resulting in wasted public dollars.

21 Equipment borrowers often have the equipment
22 purchased through Medicaid, school districts, or the
23 Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

24 Later, you will hear testimony from
25 Tracy Beck from the PA Assistive Technology

1 Foundation, which provides low-interest cash loans
2 for the purchase of assistive technology.

3 The Lending Library and Foundation have a
4 symbiotic relationship. An example: Steven. He
5 borrowed Dragon Naturally Speaking, which is speech
6 recognition software, from the Lending Library and
7 found that it was the right assistive technology for
8 him. He then received a zero-percent interest loan
9 from the AT Foundation to purchase the program. The
10 Regional Assistive Technology Resource Center then
11 provided him with the training to better use his
12 software.

13 With zero State funding, the Lending Library
14 as it is operating today will end. Instead of
15 providing more than 4,000 loans of more than 6,000
16 items annually, the Library anticipates being able to
17 provide about 200 loans.

18 The State has funded the Lending Library for
19 a decade, an investment of more than \$7 1/2 million,
20 supporting the development and maintenance of an
21 infrastructure for the acquisition, delivery, and
22 distribution of devices and the necessary technical
23 expertise. Without State funding, this is lost.

24 We anticipate the program would end by 2011.
25 Inventory would become increasingly obsolete, broken,

1 and lost, program effectiveness depleted by an
2 inability to provide equipment when and where it is
3 needed.

4 More than 36 staff positions in 10 agencies
5 across the Commonwealth funded by this program will
6 be affected, eliminating at least four positions and
7 reducing/consolidating additional positions.

8 This includes staff reduced to part-time
9 employment, subsequently losing health insurance and
10 other benefits.

11 The AT Lending Library needs at least
12 \$800,000 in order to continue operating a statewide
13 program. Both the AT Lending Library and the
14 AT Foundation are funded in the line item called
15 Assistive Technology under OVR.

16 We ask that these cost-effective, critical
17 programs are level funded at \$800,000 for the Lending
18 Library and \$500,000 for the Foundation, for a total
19 appropriation of \$1.3 million for assistive
20 technology.

21 Thank you very much for considering this
22 testimony.

23 MR. TORISKY: As one of the original members
24 of the Autism Society of America in 1965, my son is
25 52 years old and he is a survivor. He is autistic

1 and a trailblazer for appropriate services for
2 individuals with autism.

3 But it's too late for him. He is a
4 survivor. He is getting along the best way he can.
5 I'm his dad and his guardian.

6 I'm not going to give the testimony I was
7 going to give, but instead I'm going to turn it over
8 to this young lady beside me.

9 Her name is Rachel Brooks. Rachel is a
10 master's level student at the University of
11 Pennsylvania, and she has a brother named Brandon who
12 is 20 years old.

13 Brandon has a bright future because of the
14 Autism Society's community support and the Bureau of
15 Autism Services, which we waited 50 years to
16 accomplish in this State. In fact, a few
17 Legislatures, I might add.

18 But the bright future of Brandon Brooks goes
19 right down the toilet if the budget cuts, the brutal
20 budget cuts, and 850 are allowed to stand.

21 I'll say no more right now. If you have any
22 questions later, I'll be glad to answer them.

23 Rachel.

24 MS. BROOKS: Dr. David Mandell, an
25 epidemiologist -- he's a professor of epidemiology at

1 the University of Pennsylvania -- compiled a census
2 based on Medicaid application data and has determined
3 that within the next 5 to 8 years, over 20,000
4 individuals with autism will be joining the adult
5 population with various levels of severity, and that
6 includes my brother.

7 He is 20 years old now, and he will be 21 in
8 October of this year and joining the adult population
9 that no longer will be able to receive any assistance
10 through the education system.

11 This adult population with varying levels of
12 severity is in need of an appropriate degree of care,
13 treatment, training, habilitation, et cetera -- adult
14 services throughout their lives. They will be
15 joining the 30,000-plus individuals with autism of
16 adult age already there.

17 The population estimates are not guesswork.
18 The report that will be issued soon on the census by
19 the Bureau of Autism Services shows them as
20 individuals by county and zip code. So you'll know
21 how many are in your district. We know where they
22 are dispersed and what exactly their needs are.

23 Since the Autism Task Force Study and
24 implementation of key recommendations over the past
25 4 years, Pennsylvania has become the nation's leader

1 in initiatives addressing this population.

2 These initiatives are evidenced based and
3 outcomes driven, the first models of their kind ever
4 addressing the autism population of adult age.

5 Leaders of these efforts in Pennsylvania's
6 autism community are consulted throughout the
7 United States. They've been invited to provide
8 congressional briefings on these innovative models,
9 the first of their kind anywhere.

10 The initiatives put in place are fledgling,
11 but they are closely managed by the bureau, with
12 infrastructures assuring no redundancy or
13 duplication, so it's a highly efficient system.

14 We are talking about models in applied
15 research, information provision, and training and
16 include creative, innovative adult services across
17 the entire continuum.

18 These include things such as the Adult
19 Autism Waiver, the Adult Community Autism Program,
20 and the Autism Services, Education, Research and
21 Training Regional Centers, the ASERT Centers. And
22 these models are demonstrating that they can reach
23 not only urban and suburban populations but also the
24 rural populations which struggle to get any kinds of
25 services of any kind.

1 These regional centers, working with
2 providers and counties, for the first time will
3 enable parents and families to quickly assess
4 appropriate, accurate, and differential diagnoses,
5 evaluation, and care and treatment modalities, again,
6 of varying levels.

7 Specifically, the centers are beginning to
8 provide telemedicine, video conferencing, and
9 Web-based training that works.

10 For the first time, we have accurate
11 statistics on this vulnerable population's needs.

12 For the first time, a statewide information
13 system on autism services and accommodations is being
14 established.

15 For the first time, classroom education and
16 job site vocational training is resulting in
17 individuals with autism joining the workforce at many
18 levels, including doing the work of jobs that, quote,
19 "Americans won't do."

20 For the first time, a program is in place
21 that reduces the likelihood of their disability
22 manifestations getting them in trouble with the law,
23 and this is a very serious issue.

24 The problem of adjudicated individuals with
25 autism is being addressed, with a diversion program

1 including training for parents, teachers, students,
2 police, lawyers, and district justices, even a
3 judge's desk book on creative sentencing practices to
4 reduce or prevent incarceration of these people.

5 These initiatives are being done in no other
6 State, and all the States are looking to us and our
7 evidence-based models and their outcomes.

8 All of the above are aimed at enormous
9 reductions in dollar costs and in human suffering.
10 It is important to point out that with the increase
11 in autism incidences, 1 in 150, the most recent
12 census is saying that 1 in every 150 children are
13 being diagnosed with autism.

14 So that means that everyone in this room is
15 now or will be personally touched by autism. Your
16 children, your grandchildren, your relatives, your
17 close friends, will be impacted. That all includes
18 every Senator, every Representative, every
19 legislative district, every county, every town.

20 All of this has been done because of our
21 intense work in the autism community, beginning with
22 the Autism Task Force and supported by our
23 Legislators and key individuals in our government's
24 Administration and departments.

25 But to the autism community and all of the

1 above, the State budget proposal represents a
2 tsunami, gutting all of the incredible gains we have
3 made together. These remarkable beginnings literally
4 will be destroyed by the work of the Legislature.

5 I mentioned over 20,000 individuals with
6 autism joining us in adulthood between the next 5 and
7 8 years, and the University of Pennsylvania study
8 will confirm this. So let's get specific.

9 Of these 20,000, we will have 400 who are
10 getting appropriate adult services for the first time
11 through the services that the bureau is proposing
12 that are going to be cut under this bill. That is
13 barely a toe in the water.

14 This budget proposal dumps them back into
15 our expensive and overloaded system. This tsunami
16 will not only be letting down everyone with autism in
17 the State, it will be letting down the entire nation
18 that has been looking at Pennsylvania for leadership
19 as the first State of doing any of this work to
20 address broadly the problems of autism at all levels
21 of need.

22 The Senate justification right now is that
23 we are in "hard economic times," but cutting the
24 programs and services that I have described will only
25 make them worse for our State -- and very soon.

1 Our autism community's State-level
2 responsibility centers, the ASERT Centers, and the
3 Bureau of Autism Services' operational imperative is
4 to harness existing resources, making the most
5 efficient and productive use of existing dollars by
6 putting in place initiatives that are appropriate for
7 our population, and hence, less costly, with rate
8 savings in the short run and the long run.

9 So by going with these kind of short-run
10 cost-saving measures, we are going to have incredibly
11 high costs in the long run, because the programs that
12 are in place now are specifically designed to have
13 cost savings in the near future.

14 I believe the autism community has
15 demonstrated over the past several years that we are
16 organized and able to mobilize support for
17 legislative and departmental efforts on behalf of
18 individuals with autism and their families.

19 When I wanted to speak here today, I was
20 informed that a number of people wanted to come and
21 talk about this impact on the autism community. And
22 we have made our voices known recently in HB 1150,
23 the insurance bill. We are passionate, we are
24 motivated, and we let our Legislators know when we
25 are happy with them and when we are not.

1 We are not going away, and we will resist
2 with every means at our disposal, being made to start
3 all over simply because of the insensitivity and
4 shortsightedness of a very, very few in our
5 government.

6 And one final point. With over 75,000
7 individuals on the autism spectrum in Pennsylvania,
8 their circle of influence is well over 500,000
9 Pennsylvanians of voting age: immediate family
10 members, relatives, friends, brothers and sisters
11 like myself, who care, who pray for them to be able
12 to survive and flourish in our complex and demanding
13 society.

14 Thank you.

15 MR. KRAIN: I would like to thank the
16 Chairman and the Committee Members for holding the
17 hearings today.

18 As I said earlier, I'm a social worker with
19 the Department of Human Services in Philadelphia. We
20 deal with child abuse and neglect.

21 From looking at the proposals and the cuts
22 in drugs, education, and law enforcement and the
23 youth offenders' education, I will give you a few
24 examples of why that scares me.

25 About 5 years ago, I was carjacked at

1 gunpoint by an 18-year-old male. He was already
2 wanted for a prior gunpoint robbery and, during his
3 pre-18 days, was arrested for car theft and drugs and
4 whatnot.

5 And recently during these economic times, in
6 the past couple of months, I have seen two mothers
7 that have overdosed and died on drugs with kids that
8 are 5 and under left alone. Then we have to pick up
9 the bill.

10 I would hope that, you know, as the public
11 servants that we all are that during these economic
12 times, we could be a voice for the people without
13 voices. That would be the children, disabled, the
14 elderly.

15 And I'm hoping that, you know, in these
16 times we could step up and speak for them and speak
17 for ourselves so that we won't have to pay the bill
18 that we'll continue to pay if we cut out the programs
19 that we currently have.

20 And I just wanted to make the effort to keep
21 it under 5 minutes. Thank you.

22 MS. ANTHONY: My name is Linda Anthony, as I
23 said before, and I am the Policy Director for the
24 Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania. Our job
25 is to provide protection and advocacy for citizens

1 with any kind of disability they may have.

2 So I want to say thank you to the committee
3 for giving us an opportunity to share with you the
4 concerns and the effects that the cuts in
5 Senate Bill 850 will have on all the constituents
6 that we serve that are living in all the districts of
7 the Commonwealth and your districts as well.

8 I have my testimony and I have provided
9 copies for all of the Members, so I'm not going to
10 read that to you today. I would rather selfishly
11 talk to you as a 55-year-old woman who is working and
12 acquired my disability 26 years ago.

13 When that happened, I had no idea what it
14 was like to live with a disability or to try to
15 manage living with a disability. What I learned
16 early on was that I, too, was told that I would have
17 to go into a nursing home, at least until I got
18 strong enough.

19 I was one of the fortunate people that had a
20 very stubborn mother and father and two very strong
21 young brothers living in the house who helped get me
22 in and out of the bathroom and do the things that I
23 needed to do until I was strong enough.

24 And fortunately, I didn't go into a nursing
25 home, so many of our people do go into nursing homes

1 and never come out. It's a very unempowering event.

2 And what I learned was that I would be able
3 to hire an attendant who would help me do those
4 things.

5 And I want to also say that I'm sorry if my
6 thoughts are a little scattered, I'm a little
7 nervous, but I want to say to you that I am very
8 scared of what is going to happen if these cuts are
9 allowed to go through as they are.

10 The reason I'm afraid is because every day
11 of my life, I wake up and I am worried about my
12 freedom -- my ability to be in my home, my ability to
13 be with my children, with my grandchildren, and yes,
14 even my ability to go to work and pay taxes. I worry
15 about those kinds of things every single day, and my
16 freedom is not something I take for granted.

17 I learned, when I started in disability
18 rights 20 years ago, I learned something that very
19 many Americans in this country do not know, and that
20 is that there is only one thing that I, that you, and
21 every Member of this panel and every member in this
22 room, there is only one thing that you are entitled
23 to, and that is institutional care.

24 And in Pennsylvania as in other States, you
25 are required to provide people with nursing-home

1 care, State hospital care, State centers, if they
2 meet that level of need.

3 And right now as President Obama is working
4 on his health-care reform, he can provide all the
5 health care he wants to people in this country, but
6 if you don't have someone to help you with your
7 day-to-day needs, no matter what your disability is,
8 you are still going to go into an institution of some
9 kind at some point in your life because that's the
10 only thing you're entitled to.

11 And in Pennsylvania, I think the
12 Administration has seen the wisdom. They have been
13 putting money into our programs for people with
14 physical disabilities.

15 The Act 150 program, attendant care, allowed
16 me to hire a friend of mine who was a single mother
17 on welfare. It supplemented her income, and after
18 18 months of her assisting me in getting stronger and
19 building me up, I was able to stop using attendant
20 care.

21 As I said earlier, I'm 55 years old, and I'm
22 probably going to need it again very, very soon,
23 because it's getting harder and harder every day to
24 just do the everyday things.

25 But I was able to hire her, and after

1 18 months when I stopped using the services, she went
2 back to school. She is now a medical assistant
3 working full time.

4 So the cuts that are going to happen not
5 only affect those of us who have disabilities, but it
6 affects our family members; it affects our friends.
7 It keeps us in our community.

8 And it not only puts people like me -- I
9 have another friend. Both she and her husband have a
10 disability. Her husband uses a motorized wheelchair,
11 but he's the primary breadwinner in that family.
12 They also have a 10-year-old daughter.

13 If these cuts go through, the very next day,
14 many people like her and her husband are going to
15 have to make the decision of who is going to quit
16 their job so that they can stay home and take care of
17 the other person.

18 And many, many families are struggling right
19 now and they are panicking and they are very afraid
20 of what is going to happen if these cuts go through
21 to my son, to my daughter, to their adult children
22 with disabilities living in their homes that they are
23 taking care of.

24 They are a vital part of their family; they
25 are a vital part of their community, yet they sit in

1 fear every single moment that if these cuts go
2 through the way they are, they are going to either
3 have to quit their job to be able to stay home and
4 take care of their child or adult with a disability,
5 but they are also, they are going to be losing the
6 ability sometimes to even keep them in the home.
7 They are still going to have to put them in
8 institutions.

9 And I actually was listening to some of the
10 testimony earlier, and when we talk about valuable
11 assets, I think the most valuable asset we have is
12 our people in this Commonwealth. And these cuts are
13 some of the most atrocious attacks on the lives of
14 our people that I have ever seen in the last
15 20 years, and I implore you to please not let these
16 cuts go through, particularly in these human service
17 programs that not only keep people like me and my
18 friend in a job, but it also employs people who work
19 for us, who help us in our homes.

20 I don't want to go to a nursing home. I
21 haven't worked 20 years to end up in a nursing home,
22 and that is what people will face.

23 People who have mental-health disabilities
24 are going to be losing services. People who have
25 behavioral health will be losing services. What you

1 are going to see is an increase in institutional
2 care. You are going to see Medicaid dollars fly
3 through the roof because you are going to have more
4 people going into institutions.

5 I can safely tell you that the people on the
6 Attendant Care Program, for example, 600 people, many
7 of those that very next day, they are going to have
8 to find an institution to go into because they can't
9 get out of bed, they can't get dressed, they can't
10 get their meals without that day-to-day assistance
11 that the programs they are getting now have been
12 providing.

13 I worry about people who are going to end up
14 being homeless, because they are fighting for their
15 very freedom, and they don't want to go into State
16 hospitals. They don't want to put their children
17 away. I worry about the families who are trying to
18 hold their homes and their families together.

19 And I would -- I want to share with you also
20 another story of how deep the concern is in our
21 community for these cuts that are going to happen.

22 There was a young lady, and she may have
23 testified already or will be, but she and I, in
24 learning about the cuts last week, immediately
25 panicked, and we thought maybe we better get some

1 meetings with those three Senate Republican gentlemen
2 who proposed Senate Bill 850.

3 I drove to Williamsport to pick her up. She
4 uses a motorized wheelchair, and, of course, as you
5 can see, I have my wheelchair. But I have a
6 lift-equipped van.

7 So I drove up to Williamsport. We
8 rearranged everything, including her attendant care
9 which would help her get up. She needed to be able
10 to get ready for the day. But she also works a
11 full-time job.

12 But she took the day off. I went up to
13 Williamsport to pick her up. With the help of her
14 attendant, both of us got into my van and we drove to
15 Bellefonte to meet with a Senator to talk about these
16 cuts. And the reason we rearranged everything was
17 because we were told we would get to meet with him
18 personally.

19 So we took advantage of that, and we drove
20 the hour long up to Bellefonte. She went along with
21 me knowing that for 6 or 7 hours, she would have no
22 way to use the bathroom. So she wasn't going to eat
23 anything during that whole time, despite the fact
24 that she was already battling an infection. But she
25 felt that this was her freedom on the line, and

1 literally it is.

2 She was raised in a nursing home. Finally,
3 at the age of about 16, was brought back out of the
4 nursing home. And now she works full time. She
5 bought her own house. She lives by herself. She
6 totally is dependent on the attendant that comes in
7 and helps get her out of bed and off to work, and
8 then comes in in the evening to get her back in bed.
9 And she employs five attendants in the course of
10 doing that.

11 So cutting the Attendant Care Program, for
12 example, will cause her to not only lose her job; she
13 will have to end up giving up her house. She will go
14 back into a nursing home because there are no more
15 family members in her life that are still around to
16 help her.

17 So I implore you to please restore the cuts
18 to the human service programs that Senate Bill 850
19 will do and maintain the integrity of Pennsylvania.

20 I think the Administration recognized the
21 Governor's proposed budget not only continued to
22 serve the people that are getting programs, but it
23 also allowed to serve new people coming into the
24 program. It provided a way to serve people that have
25 been waiting for years, languishing on waiting lists.

1 And the Governor's proposed budget I think
2 did that not only because I think it's the right
3 thing to do, but also because you will be able to
4 serve more people in the community with the same
5 amount of money that you are serving someone in these
6 State facilities.

7 I heard someone earlier quote that the
8 nursing-home costs are about \$50,000 a year. My
9 ex-husband acquired his disability at a late age, and
10 I found that I had to put him in a nursing home for a
11 short time so he could get the help and rehab he
12 needed. That's when I found out, because I had to
13 sign all his paperwork, it's \$85,000 a year for him
14 to be in that nursing home.

15 The cost of attendant care in this State is
16 about \$25,000 a year, so if you can imagine that you
17 are not only going to be taking people out of work,
18 but people even who are not working, you are going to
19 see a huge increase in the amount of money it costs
20 to provide them with day-to-day care. If it ends up
21 being in an institution or a nursing home, it is
22 going to be very, very expensive for the State of
23 Pennsylvania.

24 Again, I want to thank you very much for
25 your time and opportunity to tell you our concerns

1 about Senate Bill 850.

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Do you want to say
3 something, Representative Mahoney?

4 REPRESENTATIVE MAHONEY: I just can't read
5 what you have back there.

6 (Sign held up.)

7 REPRESENTATIVE MAHONEY: That's all.

8 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Okay.

9 What I would like to do is thank you for
10 coming to testify before the committee.

11 As I said earlier, this is a conversation.
12 We all know that it's a difficult time, but we have
13 got to work together, and that is what our view is.
14 And we believe that by working together, we can try
15 to come up with some type of a middle ground.

16 We recognize the difficulties on both sides,
17 obviously for the people who pay the bill as well as
18 the people who need the services. So we have to
19 figure that out, and that's the purpose of this
20 hearing, is to have those kinds of discussions, to
21 figure out where we can go from here.

22 Again, I think my staff got copies of your
23 testimony?

24 Again, I would like to thank you for coming
25 to testify before us.

1 MS. ANTHONY: Can I say one last thing?

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Yes.

3 MS. ANTHONY: I know that people don't want
4 to raise taxes, but I'll be honest with you: If
5 raising taxes is going to help me be free to live in
6 the community and my friends and my cousin with
7 mental retardation and my other cousin with mental
8 health, if that's going to help us be free, I'll be
9 more than happy to pay taxes, because that's what it
10 means to us.

11 It's our freedom.

12 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Thank you very
13 much. Yes.

14 MR. TORISKY: Mr. Chairman?

15 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Yes?

16 MR. TORISKY: One final point.

17 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Sure.

18 MR. TORISKY: We wouldn't have gotten this
19 far with autism and the other vulnerable trunks of
20 our population if these innovative things hadn't been
21 put in place.

22 If it hadn't been for you guys in the
23 Legislature, like Denny O'Brien, you, Markosek,
24 Frankel, all the rest of you guys and girls---

25 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Thank you.

1 MR. TORISKY: ---we wouldn't have done it
2 without you. You are allowing your own, if you let
3 this go through, you are allowing your own work to be
4 destroyed. You worked as hard as we have.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Thank you.

6 MR. TORISKY: Amen.

7 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN EVANS: Amen to you, too.

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9 (The hearing concluded at 1:34 p.m.)

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1 I hereby certify that the proceedings and
2 evidence are contained fully and accurately in the
3 notes taken by me on the within proceedings and that
4 this is a correct transcript of the same.

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Debra B. Miller, Reporter

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