



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HERITAGE CENTERS STATEMENT

(BUFFALO, NY, December 3, 2009) – In response to the budget cuts approved in Albany yesterday, which include significant cuts to programs that service people with developmental disabilities, Michael L. Gross, Heritage Centers Executive Director, has issued a statement.

“Regardless of whatever ‘spin’ one wants to use to justify the recent decision by NYS to cut millions of dollars from individuals and families with special needs, the result is potentially devastating. Taking an axe to NYS not-for-profit providers directly and negatively affects the very families who have already taken a substantial hit from the current economic situation.

Legislators who say that it is time for NYS to ‘feel the pain’ fail to understand that the very families whom they are trying to emulate are the very families that will be hurt once again. When agencies, such as Heritage Centers, have to layoff people or stop hiring new people or stop offering services to families who are already overtaxed with bearing the weight of caring for many of our individuals who require enormous amounts of supervision and treatment, we are in fact making NYS families feel the pain TWICE!

The rhetoric used to disregard this group of NYS citizens is a subterfuge for hiding what the Governor and Legislature did not do; i.e., look closely at NYS’s sacred cows. The sacred cows that are controlled by influential and free spending unions, who guarantee re-election campaign money and votes. The not-for-profit sector cannot, for the most part, compete with this type of political clout. Even those not-for-profits who are represented by labor unions get left by the wayside when the bigger boys in the union want their way. So even being unionized is no guarantee of equal representation and protection as offered to schools and hospitals.

Standing in line longer to get your driver’s license, waiting longer for a state park to open, or paying \$10 a month more in tuition is far lesser pain for a family to feel, then having reduced levels of care for their child with a seizure disorder; or cerebral palsy; or developmental disabilities; or autism. There is no equal sharing of pain, only the consistent pandering to special interests and the erosion of services to those individuals with special needs.”

Heritage Centers is a local non-profit that employs over 900 people and serves more than 3,000 individuals with disabilities (and their families) each year. Individualized services include, but are not limited to: early intervention, education, residential, vocational, service coordination, legal and advocacy programming.

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