

W News from THE WALLACE GROUP

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**Minnesota Organization for Habilitation
and Rehabilitation - MOHR**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Capitol rally March 13 to prompt action from legislators to face disability funding challenges, looming cuts

Services face 7 percent funding drop at time when already struggling to hire and retain workers, crowd of a thousand from across the state, many with disabilities, expected

Concerned that state human service planners are placing further stress on a complex disability service system that has left nonprofit providers struggling for years, the Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation (MOHR), its service provider members, families and individuals with disabilities are rallying at the Minnesota Capitol Rotunda beginning at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, March 13.

“All we are looking for is for some sense of long term stability,” said Mike Burke, president of MOHR. “Stability in a system that will allow us to pay our staff competitive wages, which ultimately helps thousands of people with disabilities across the state who rely on our services for their quality of life.”

A direct threat to service providers, Burke explains, is a recently announced 7 percent funding cut for services. Complex formulas that determine rates paid to disability service providers are tied to an inflationary factor and funding agreements with the federal government, he said. Bills are in the works to fix the problem, which, if left unaddressed, could mean damaging cuts that are permanent.

MOHR joins the Association of Residential Resources of Minnesota (ARRM), and the Best Life Alliance, a statewide coalition of people with disabilities, their families and providers of home and community-based services. Attendance is expected to reach 1,000 participants.

Short speeches are planned from a number of legislators, disability staff members and others impacted by legislative decisions. Individuals who receive services will make introductions. Burke said the day is an excellent opportunity to put faces and names before state leaders to help them understand that they are not simply talking about policies and money, but people's lives. "It's important for senators and representatives to hear from individuals with disabilities, their families and the people who work closely with them," said Burke.

People with disabilities from the suburbs, to the far reaches of the Minnesota prairie and lakes regions will come to hear speakers, wave signs, cheer, clap and then head to appointments with their individual legislators. They will also enjoy some "rousing and high energy" music from the Lifeworks Choir. Lifeworks is an Eagan-based day provider of disability services, and a member of MOHR.

Burke said the issues often come down to the “person-centered” concept of allowing people with disabilities and their families to make choices. “If you give someone three more choices, awesome! But, if you give three more choices and eliminate two things, that’s not a choice,” said Burke.

Representing more than 100 providers in the state, MOHR members provide skills training, employment services, community involvement, behavioral supports and life enrichment activities to more than 26,000 individuals with disabilities in Minnesota.

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