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The New Hampshire Community Behavioral Health Association is one of 22 social service and provider agency members of NH CARES who signed this letter to Governor John Lynch, requesting a public hearing on further cuts to the State operating budget.

The letter was delivered to the Governor today, in anticipation of:

- Budget cuts that will be announced by DHHS tomorrow, April 8th
- the legislative Fiscal Committee meeting on Monday, April 12th; and
- the Governor's State of the State address, scheduled for Tuesday, April 13th, in Somersworth.

We have heard informally that the new cuts will be devastating to the safety net and we are bracing ourselves for the worst. Our request to the Governor is that citizens be heard before the new cuts are implemented, and that alternatives to budget cuts – such as new revenue – be aired.

We will keep you apprised of Governor's response to the NH CARES letter, and to the date, time and location of the public hearing, whether it is hosted by the Governor, or by and for citizens.

April 7, 2010

Governor John Lynch
Office of the Governor
State House
107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Governor Lynch:

On behalf of NH CARES, we are writing to respectfully request that any comprehensive changes you are preparing to the State operating budget be presented to the public in a forum that will allow the impacts of these spending and revenue changes to be aired and discussed as openly as is practicable. For 25 years, NH CARES has brought together human service advocates and service providers to share information on what is needed to maintain the safety net for New Hampshire's vulnerable citizens. We have worked with the legislature, governor and DHHS staff on every State budget in that time to enact a budget based on sound principles of caring for our citizens.

In recent weeks, news reports and legislative testimony have suggested that you are in the process of developing a plan to close the projected \$140 million gap between authorized budget allocations and anticipated general fund revenues. However, there remains meaningful

speculation about what will be included in your plan and a serious lack of information about how such important changes in State financial policy will be implemented. NH CARES strongly believes that a transparent and deliberate process will only improve the outcome and may well lead to improvements.

*We expect that your plan will not have a single decision point, but rather will have some elements that will require legislation, some that will need Fiscal Committee approval, and some that could be implemented with no public process. But no matter how the plan is constructed, a \$140 million change in the State operating budget is very significant. It will undoubtedly impact individuals and families, employers and employees, vulnerable sectors of the social service network, and the economy in general. **Given the size and scope of such a change, we would ask that, before any further elements of this plan are implemented, citizens be given the opportunity to comment on it, in its entirety.** We appreciate that such a public presentation is not required by State law, and that as Governor, you can certainly move forward without the benefit of a public, open process. In normal circumstances, the non-public process for minor adjustments to the budget may be appropriate, but these are not normal times. **Therefore, we are asking that extraordinary care be given to engage the public and to assess how changes to the SFY 2010-2011 budget impacts all our state's citizens.***

*It is likely that the proposed budget reductions will lead to measurable job losses, shifts of costs to other levels of government and sectors of the economy, as well as the elimination of programs for the poor, weak and fragile citizens of New Hampshire. We have no reason to believe that the non-public process of making further budget cuts, undertaken by you, your staff and State agency heads, has not been considered with much care, and that managing the consequences of these actions has not been foremost in your mind. **But hearing from those who are not a part of government and who are critically affected by its decisions is an important part of public budgeting in New Hampshire, and a forum for the public to be heard needs to part of the upcoming process.***

*NH CARES is well aware of the need to act in a timely fashion. **We are eager to work with you and your office** and could act in a coordinating role to develop an appropriate public means to gather public input on the implementation of this supplemental budgeting and the effects of proposed changes on the populations we serve.*

Signed on behalf of NH CARES

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