
From: Darla Letourneau [mailto:letournd@peoplepc.com]
Sent: Thursday, March 27, 2008 11:53 AM
To: Speaker Rubio (marco.rubio@myfloridahouse.gov)
Subject: Protect TANF Substance Abuse Services for women and children
Importance: High

Speaker Rubio,

I understand that the House is considering the elimination of TANF funds dedicated to substance abuse. I urge you to oppose this proposal. These funds are critical for children of women with substance abuse problems to be cared for in their own homes and to emphasize treatment, work and self-sufficiency for these women.

I am a member of the Zonta Club of Sanibel-Captiva, part of an international service organization of professional women working to advance the status of women both locally and globally. For the past 8 years, our Club has had a rewarding partnership with Southwest Florida Addiction Services (SWFAS), helping women transition from addiction to self-sufficiency. We have seen first hand the value of addiction services in helping these women put their lives back together—returning to the workforce, moving to their own homes, and reuniting with their children and families. There are many more people in need of these services than SWFAS has the resources to serve. With the proposed cuts, the gap will grow even larger. SWFAS estimates that 30-35 women and 65-85 children will lose services with this proposed TANF cut. A 29-year old mother of four in the Lee County Dependency Drug Court for treatment is the type of patient who will be on a wait list.

This kind of cut is not only devastating for the individuals affected, but is not sound fiscal policy. The loss of these funds will increase the demand for state funded social services, including child welfare, foster care, dependency courts, unemployment and public assistance.

The economic downturn in Florida and its impact on State and local revenues, along with the recent passage of Amendment 1, make it imperative to find ways to cost-effectively meet the needs of the citizens of Florida. Investments in substance abuse prevention and treatment programs will reduce overall costs for government and its taxpayers and, at the same time, improve the quality of life for Floridians.

Thank you for your consideration of my views.

Darla Letourneau
Sanibel