



The Washington Times

March 3, 2009

LETTER TO EDITOR: Help the disabled and save money

Reading recent headlines about investing in what we need and cutting what we don't following President Obama's fiscal summit, I must say that I could not agree more. Some glib inferences have been made about Medicaid restructuring.

More than 50,000 people with developmental disabilities (i.e. autism, mental retardation, cerebral palsy, spina bifida) live in large congregate institutions (more than 300 persons) in 39 states. This is down from more than 100,000 people living in large institutions in all 50 states 17 years ago because many were placed in small community-based homes. States did this because of lawsuits and other forms of pressure from advocates who questioned the quality of life in the large institutions. There is also the fact that the average cost in these facilities is much more than \$200,000 per person annually but it is about half that much in the community-based homes. The president should develop incentives to enhance the quality of life for persons with developmental disabilities through Medicaid restructuring.

The investment in what we need with a new infrastructure will not only save more than \$5 billion but allow for the purchase of more than 15,000 new homes and 20,000 new vehicles and will create thousands of jobs. The vacated facilities could be used by universities, communities and even prisons to alleviate overcrowding. However, the real incentive is that it would increase the quality of life.

I have been involved with the closure of many facilities, and I see people who were tax burdens become taxpayers. I personally know people who formerly lived in institutions who now own their own homes and are making their mortgage payments and paying taxes. A great many people must roll up their sleeves to make this happen. There are plenty of us out here who are ready to do the work to invest in what we need and cut what we don't. We just need the call.

ROBERT STACK

President and CEO,

Community Options Inc.

Princeton, N.J.



© The Washington Times. Permission granted for up to 10 copies. All rights reserved.

You may forward this article or get additional permissions by typing

http://license.icopyright.net/3.7280?icx_id=/news/2009/mar/03/help-the-disabled-and-save-money/ into any web browser.

The Washington Times, LLC and The Washington Times logos are registered trademarks of The Washington Times, LLC . The iCopyright logo is a

registered trademark of iCopyright, Inc.