



December 30, 2009

Co-Chair Senator Kathleen Vinehout
Co-Chair Representative Peter Barca
Joint Legislative Audit Committee
State Capitol

Dear Co-Chairs Vinehout and Barca:

On behalf of the 54 organizations represented by RFW, I am writing in support of Representative Samantha Kerkman's request for an audit of the Family Care program. Along with this letter, I am enclosing a copy of the testimony that RFW provided at the Informational Hearing on Family Care held by the Assembly's Committee on Aging and Long-Term Care on November 12, 2009. It spells out the main issues that we feel should be examined.

As stated in our testimony, RFW supports the goals of the Family Care program. We also applaud the Department of Health Services for hiring Susan Crowley as the Administrator of the Division of Long Term Care. Susan has brought a breath of fresh air to the management of the program, with her inclusive approach to seeking feedback from stakeholders.

However, improvements in the leadership of the program alone will not resolve all of the issues that RFW members are experiencing with Family Care. This is because the way long term care is being restructured has affected the relationship between the entities that fund services and the providers of those services. In the county-based system, long term care managers often worked in partnership with providers, whereas some of the managed care organizations (MCOs) have adopted a more adversarial approach towards providers. For example, we have noted a disturbing trend in the contract negotiations between MCOs and service providers around the state, in which the MCOs are making unilateral rate reductions for both vocational/day services and residential services provided to people with disabilities with extensive support needs. This may be driven in part by the underfunding of the MCOs, as noted in our November 12 testimony. But, it may also be fueled by the lack of accountability of MCOs to taxpayers and inadequate oversight of the Family Care program by elected officials, in contrast to the management of the Community Integration and Community Options Programs (CIP and COP) for which elected county officials were held accountable.

We hope that you will initiate an audit of the Family Care program to determine what is working and what is not, with the objective of improving the program. We would recommend that you interview advocates, program consumers and service providers as part of the audit. RFW believes that greater legislative oversight is needed to keep the program on track. In our view, legislators have an obligation to ensure that the long term care system is responsive to the needs of their constituents during the transition to the Family Care program, which is gradually replacing the county-based administration of CIP and COP.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'C. Thomas Cook'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

C. Thomas Cook
RFW Executive Director