

News...

from the Illinois House of Representatives

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
July 1, 2015

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
State Rep. Stephanie Kifowit 630-585-1308

Kifowit Hosts Community Meeting to Discuss Impact of Severe Budget Cuts on Local Communities

AURORA, Ill. – On Monday, in a room filled with residents and community members, State Rep. Stephanie Kifowit hosted a community meeting to discuss the impact of the budget impasse in Springfield and the severe proposed cuts offered by the Governor.

“Severe cuts to local governments and services impact the quality of life in our communities”, Kifowit said. “Services reductions for individuals with developmental disabilities or for domestic violence victims in addition to cuts to public safety affect us all.”

The community meeting began with remarks from newly elected Oswego Village President Gail Johnson, who said, “The proposed cut would equate to a reduction of about \$1.5 million dollars. For a small town like Oswego this is a large portion of our budget that will affect services.”

The panel also included Professor David Merriman, Ph.D., public economist from the Institute of Government and Public Affairs and the Department of Public Administration at the University of Illinois at Chicago, author of numerous articles on the budget of the State of Illinois, who gave an overview on the State of Illinois budget and history. “The data has concluded that if the State of Illinois fixes the budget problem, then the economy will follow; not the other way around,” Merriman said.

Local service providers then joined state Rep. Stephanie Kifowit, D-Oswego, on the panel during the community meeting to discuss the impacts of services for area residents.

The most vocal of the panel was Betty Schoenholtz from Senior Services who stated that “frail older adults who don’t have the strength to stand up for themselves are being used as pawns, and these are the people we help, frail older adults who won’t get the help they need.” She discussed the changes to the determination of need score threshold for service eligibility, which will cause these older adults to be institutionalized and removed from their homes where they can live independently as a result of home care provided by agencies like Senior Services, Schoenholtz added “A reduction of \$125,000 would not allow Senior Services to investigate elder abuse, service residents in their homes or ensure that frail older adults have the quality of life they deserve after being taxpayers for their whole life. To be honest, these cuts just do not add up to me as being beneficial or cost effective in the long run”.

Michelle Meyer, Executive Director from Mutual Ground spoke on the reduction in the school outreach program, which could be eliminated due to the State of Illinois cutting funding, which makes up about 35% of Mutual Ground’s budget. “Our school outreach program results in 15-18 disclosures of youth sexual abuse a month, these children will no longer have someone to go to when they are being abused.

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Who are they going to tell if we aren't there? They are not comfortable going to a family member so they come to us," Meyer said.

Nikki Lay, representing Breaking Free discussed the negative effects of the cuts with regards to the reduction in Substance Abuse Early Intervention and Treatment services, Community Based Prevention Services and Family Based Services."If we have to close these programs, more people will end up in the jails instead of getting the help they need," Lay said.

Laurie Nagle representing Ray Graham Association of Illinois said that "the cuts proposed will close the Specialized Living Center which provides 24 hour nursing care for medically fragile individuals, and will cost the State significantly more than \$2 million dollars to transfer these individuals to a state-run development center. This is a 200% increase in the cost to the State of Illinois. It simply does not make sense". The Ray Graham Association provides services and supports to over 2000 children and adults with disabilities.

Jacinda Adams from Presence Fox River Valley Medical Center discussed the proposed Medicaid cuts. "28% of our patients are on Medicaid and most are disabled individuals and children. The proposed cuts would cost us \$11 Million dollars in Aurora alone, and we simply can't sustain that loss. We do not turn people away, and with this reduction would severely affect a lot of people's lives that we are responsible for," Adams said.

Professor Merriman stated that reducing "Medicaid expenditures can't be done by cuts, the State of Illinois needs to reduce the poverty level. Most of Medicaid spending is on poor, sick individuals mostly children."

"Many families, especially middle-class families, in my district will lose vital services if these cuts are allowed to happen," Kifowit said. "The proposed budget cuts put forth by the Governor is a 'penny-wise, pound foolish' approach. Many of these organizations are run very efficiently and provide a cheaper alternative to care that is desperately needed. I believe we need a balanced approach to this budget crisis."

"Fiscal crisis does not bring out efficiency," noted Professor Merriman, "a good process is what brings about efficiency".

For more information, please contact Kifowit's full-time constituent service office by calling [630-585-1308](tel:630-585-1308), by email at Stephanie.Kifowit@att.net, or by visiting www.ILDistrict84.com.

See attached photo

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Pictured: Oswego Village President Gail Johnson, left, joins State Rep. Stephanie Kifowit, right, at a community meeting at Oswego East High School on June 29 in Oswego where area service providers detailed how proposed budget cuts would impact the care offered to local residents.

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