



## \$30 million "mistake" could cost 20,000 mental health care, advocate says

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[Springfield Political Buzz Examiner](#)

**(Springfield, IL) – June 20, 2011.** A top Illinois mental health advocate group said today a \$30 million clerical "mistake" could end mental health care for 20,000 Illinois residents without legislative action by the Illinois Senate this week.

"A \$30 million 'mistake' means that nearly low-income 20,000 children, mothers and men will lose community mental health care unless the Illinois Senate acts on Wednesday," said Community Behavioral Healthcare Association CEO Frank Anselmo said today.

When the Illinois House a few weeks ago approved its version of the Illinois fiscal year 2012 budget, [House Bill 3717](#), the legislation inadvertently slated funding for mental health care grants at \$114.2 million instead of \$143.6 million or 98.6% of the current year's funding.

State Rep. **Sara Feigenholtz** (D-Chicago), Chair of the House Human Services Committee, the panel which originally approved the mental health budget, discovered the error a few days before the legislature's May 31 adjournment and acted swiftly to win overwhelming, bi-partisan approval, 109-7, for a legislative rescue, [Senate Bill 2407 \(House Amendment #2\)](#), to restore the money.

The measure, which is being sponsored in the Senate by State Senator **Heather Steans** (D-Chicago), fell victim to last minute budget maneuvering over capital construction funding and additional human services budget increases.

For the Chicago-based C4, a community mental health agency located in Steans' district on the city's north side, the failure of the Illinois Senate to act would likely eliminate care for 3,100 neighborhood residents, says the agency's CEO.

**"Because of the array of services C4 offers, we would lose almost \$3.25 million from our budget," said C4's Tony Kopera. "It costs about \$1,000 per year for C4 to serve children**

**and adults with mental illness. The simple math is that about 3,100 people would be denied care on Chicago's north side."**

In addition to the Community Behavioral Healthcare Association of Illinois, the Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (IARF), is also mobilizing to urge the Illinois Senate to approve the "Feigenholtz Fix" when senators return to Springfield on Wednesday for a brief session day.

"We have a glimmer of hope right now of restoring some of the cuts to the Mental Health Grant line in the FY12 budget," wrote IARF Legislative Director **Josh Evans** in an e-mail to supporters on Friday morning.

**"Basically, as long as this bill is understood as fixing a mistake in the House budget, we have a chance that we may be able to get this bill called for a vote in the Senate next Wednesday."**

"Without senate approval of this money, mental health care providers will almost certainly be terminating care for tens thousands of people beginning on July 1," said one lobbyist involved in the advocacy effort.

**"You can't balance a budget on a wing-and-a prayer that something will happen in January."**

Because all bills require a 3/5th vote in each chamber after May 31, all 35 Democratic senators and at least one GOP senator would need to vote for the bill. The Senate begins its session at noon on Wednesday.

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