



For Immediate Release

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Governor Scott: It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget Invests in Priorities for Persons with Disabilities and Vulnerable Populations

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Governor Rick Scott today highlighted investments in the It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget directed to support individuals with disabilities.

Governor Scott said, "We're committed to providing every Florida family the opportunity to live the American Dream – and this Budget invests another \$20 million to move more than 1,000 individuals off the APD waitlist. This is the second year in a row we've been able to improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities and their families."

The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget supports Governor Scott's commitment to make investments in Florida's most vulnerable communities.

Brings Individuals with Critical Needs Off Agency for Persons with Disabilities

Waitlist: The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget funding of the Developmental Disabilities Medicaid Waiver waiting list will bring all remaining individuals with critical needs off of the waiting list – a first in the history of the program. The Budget provides \$20 million to bring more than 1,000 individuals off of the waiting list for the second year in a row and provides them with home and community-based services to help them live, learn, and work in their communities.

Supported Employment: The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget invests a total of \$2.5 million toward job placement and training for individuals with developmental disabilities who are looking for employment and internship opportunities. With this increased funding, more young adults with developmental disabilities will have firsthand opportunities to demonstrate their skills in the workplace. Maximizing firsthand experiences in the workplace was one of three primary recommendations of the 2012 report by the Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities.

William J. (Billy Joe) Rish Recreational Park: The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget provides \$1 million to provide maintenance and repairs at Billy Joe Rish Park, located on the St. Joseph Peninsula near Port St. Joe and Cape San Blas in Northwest Florida. Rish Park is open year round for people with disabilities and their family members, guardians, and caregivers.

Personal Needs Allowance: The Budget supports \$539,000 to increase the personal needs allowance from \$35 to \$105 per month for individuals living in Intermediate Care Facilities run by the Agency for Persons with Disabilities.

Early Intervention Services for Autism: The Budget supports \$1.4 million toward early screening and intervention services for children with autism spectrum disorder in underserved families. These services will provide relief to families by teaching critical skills, reducing problem behavior, and improving IQ and adaptive and social skills in their children. Funds will also be used to train future physicians, psychologists, and behavioral therapists who will be crucial in expanding access to these important services in the future.

MACTown Fitness and Wellness: The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget continues efforts to identify new and different ideas for helping individuals with developmental disabilities achieve their maximum potential in living healthy and productive lives. The Budget supports \$175,000 for MACTown Fitness and Wellness Center in Miami-Dade for a personalized, safe, and closely monitored environment. Individuals can pursue their fitness goals through education, hands-on experience, and a consistent schedule of exercising on professional and specialized equipment and aerobics classes. The healthier the individual, the better they are able to maximize their independent living skills.

The Arc of Florida Dental Services: The Budget supports much-needed dental services for individuals with developmental disabilities through another \$2 million provided to The Arc of Florida. Funds will be used to enroll new providers and continue statewide coordinated dental services, which will improve the health and self-confidence of the people served.

Rate Increase for Adult Day Training Providers: The Budget supports \$1.3 million for a two percent across-the-board raise to all providers of adult day training services in the Medicaid Home and Community Based Services Waiver program. These services are among the most popular in the program. Providers offer individuals up to six hours per day of meaningful activities that support the individual in daily routines of the community, including training in the areas of self-help, adaptive, and social skills. These services are provided in congregate, facility-based settings, and may include off-site enclaves or mobile work crews.

APD Director Barbara Palmer said, "I am thrilled the Legislature supported Governor Scott's recommendation to fund the waiver waiting list for a second consecutive year. With this new money, we will now be able to serve the remaining individuals with critical needs on the waiting list. This is a major milestone for APD. I appreciate Governor Scott and the Legislature's ongoing support of APD and assistance in helping us achieve this important goal."

Pat Young, president of The Arc of Florida, a non-profit organization that advocates on behalf of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, said, "We are grateful to Governor Scott and the Legislature for moving

individuals off of the Medicaid Waiver Waitlist and continuing to fund this important dental program. Many Floridians with developmental disabilities have suffered from dental pain for more than a decade. They will now be pain-free.”

Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities Executive Director Suzanne Sewell said, “The Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (Florida ARF) thanks Governor Scott and the Florida Legislature for responding to the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities by appropriating an additional \$20 million to serve individuals and families who have been waiting for years to receive essential services. Because of this budget, more than 1,000 individuals will be served during next fiscal year. Additionally, another \$500,000 was approved to assist individuals with disabilities with achieving of their career goals. Our member agencies are thrilled that so many individuals will be receiving the supports they need to maintain their independence and enhance their quality of life,”

Florida Developmental Disabilities Council Executive Director Debra Dowds said, “We are very appreciative of Governor Rick Scott for his continued support to address the needs of Floridians with developmental disabilities. Through this additional funding many more people with developmental disabilities on the waiting list will be offered waiver enrollment and receive the services they need to be employed, independent, and to meaningfully participate in their communities.”

Sherry Wheelock, Special Olympics Florida President and CEO said, “This funding is critical to the health and emotional well-being of people with developmental disabilities in Florida allowing them to be contributing and respected members of society.”

Betty Kay Clements, parent and past chairperson of the Family Care Council Florida said, “I want to express a sincere thank you to Governor Scott and Florida legislators for continuing to address the APD waiting list by budgeting \$20 million for next year. These dollars will ensure that additional individuals will enroll in the APD HCBS waiver and receive the quality services and supports they need. The \$500,000 for employment services also increases the number of individuals who will realize their goal of working in their community alongside their neighbors, and reaching their potential. The money for Rish Park will allow APD to upgrade this unique park and assist people with disabilities to enjoy a full range of accessible recreational adventures among nature and a beautiful Florida coastline.”

The Association of Support Coordination Agencies of Florida chairperson Janice Phillips said, “The association is heartened by the efforts of Governor Scott and the 2014 Legislature to improve the lives of Florida’s most vulnerable citizens. For the second year in a row, additional funding is allocated to provide needed assistance to individuals on the waiver waiting list. This also provides assurance and encouragement to other families remaining on the list that help is on the way. We also applaud the governor and Legislature for providing funding for supported employment to people with developmental disabilities. This will enable individuals to become more productive citizens of Florida by enhancing their lives with meaningful employment and added inclusion and engagement in their communities. The funding for improvements to Rish

Park—an extraordinary facility designed as a completely wheelchair-accessible getaway for people with disabilities—will provide many hours of enjoyment to this population for generations to come. The inclusion of these items in the 2014-15 state budget is very exciting for all of us who serve this very special group of Floridians.”

Area 2 Family Care Council Chairperson Lou Ogburn said, “We are pleased that money has been put in the budget to further reduce the folks who are on the waiting list, to provide dollars to help with employment efforts, and to improve Rish Park. It is critical that our state continue to work on eliminating the waiting list for those needing services. The dollars for employment efforts will help by allowing some people to work and thereby reducing the amount needed from the waiver while keeping them living in the least restrictive environment.”

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