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# Hundreds rally at State House for mental health services

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By John O'Connor [CONNECT](#)

MONTGOMERY, AL (WSFA) - Fearing cuts of between 33 and 100 million dollars to mental health services if lawmakers don't pass new revenue measures, hundreds of people rallied at the State House today.

Selma Congressman Darrio Melton addressed the crowd saying, "If we don't do right by the least in our community, then woe be unto us."

Today's rally comes a day after the House pulled all budget bills that will raise taxes from being voted on. This as leaders in the Senate say they don't want to raise taxes at all.

No one is more concerned than the people who provide services for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Henry Parker, the Executive Director of Montgomery Mental Health Services is predicting catastrophic consequences if cuts are made. "As services are cut they're going to be out on the street getting into trouble. So our city and county jails will fill up with more people and it costs more for them to be housed in a jail that it does for me to provide treatment," Parker told WSFA 12 News.

The Governor is predicting that over 24 thousand people will lose some or all of the services they receive, that 1,084 Mental Health workers will lose their jobs, that \$64 million in federal matching dollars will be lost, and that 584 patients will lose residential services if predicted cuts are made.

Karen Hallmark, the mother of an adult child with cerebral palsy who lives in a group home said, "She'll have to come home. She'll be isolated from her peers. She'll lose some of the relationships she's formed. She'll continue as she gets older to be able to do less and less."

And as parents, family and care givers worry about what a loss of services will mean for them, members of law enforcement are concerned about the affect it will have on them. Major John Bowman of the Montgomery Police Department is worried about how cuts would affect law enforcement. "You look at a situation that may look criminal, but when you look below the surface it's a mental health patient not a criminal. What the mental patient needs is not jail. What they need is treatment in some mental health facility," said Bowman.

It is also estimated that two thousand people will have to quit their jobs in order to stay home and care for a family member who has lost their residential or day care services. Both state budgets are back in committee tomorrow as lawmakers are down to their last four session days they have left to pass a budget.

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