



**Appropriations Committee  
Written Testimony for LB 952**

Chairman Heidemann and members of the Appropriations Committee. The Arc of Nebraska is a support and advocacy organization with and for people with developmental disabilities. We are a state-affiliated chapter of The Arc of the United States. The Arc of Nebraska is a statewide organization with 15 local chapters and approximately 1,200 members across Nebraska.

Since the dissemination of the December 1, 2011 letter from Director Chaumont, The Arc of Nebraska has been on the alert of what these proposed cuts would mean to Nebraskans with developmental disabilities and their families. On the face of the letter, it appears that these cuts would do nothing but result in a monetary savings to the state. In fact, the purported savings come at a much higher cost; a monetary cost, but more importantly, a human cost.

Families and people with disabilities are here today to share their stories about how these proposed cuts will affect them. Those stories will carry much more impact than what I will be able to offer in my testimony. However, I'd like you to understand the impact of these proposed cuts on the system and the state as a whole.

In supporting documentation from the Division of Medicaid it appears that these cuts will affect a small number of people. This is inaccurate. In fact, without these supports in place, a much greater number of people will be affected. Families and other potential caregivers, who cannot bear to see their loved one without services, will be the ones who must step in to assist when the services are no longer adequate. What does this really mean?

When family members step in, they are likely leaving their paid employment to do so. Now, they are no longer contributing to the economy. Now, they too, may come to rely upon public benefits because their income is no longer enough to make ends meet. Further, without employment, they will probably lose their insurance coverage and need to access Medicaid. Where is the savings?

We often also lose sight of the fact that people with disabilities are contributing citizens to the economy. When people with disabilities have the supports they need in their life, they are able to pursue employment and become tax payers. Too often, we assume that people with disabilities are consumers of the system. We devalue people when we do this. We cannot allow cuts that demonstrate that this devaluation is accepted or even condoned.

*Achieve with us.*

Some people here today will tell you about the importance of nursing services, nutritional supplements, and other services that have made their families be able to function. Others will tell you that without something as simple as eyeglasses, they will not be able to work. Also, it is well known that a lack of dental services is detrimental to people's health. Again, the savings seems miniscule compared to the real costs.

Instead of looking at places where we cut spending at the risk of killing people or at the very least driving them to institutionalization, we suggest looking at how we can maximize current programs we are currently operating, such as Money Follows the Person, and others. We also recommend that the State be required to seek other funding opportunities where more federal funds will offset state spending. Historically we have done this reluctantly, if at all. This needs to change.

We offer that passing LB 952 is a first step to ensure that the legislature values all Nebraskans and what they contribute as taxpayers, as citizens and as people.