

Loss of adult day care funding causes anger, confusion at Carson meeting

By Melissa Evans Staff Writer

Posted: 10/17/2011 05:13:22 PM PDT

Updated: 10/17/2011 07:09:26 PM PDT

With state-funded adult day care for the elderly and disabled slated for elimination in less than two months, residents expressed anger and confusion at a discussion Monday in Carson.

Some, including Tiffanie Day of Carson, wanted to know why the government is sending charitable money overseas when seniors here need help.

Others, including Westchester resident Armine Manukian, worry about the workers who will lose their jobs and the needy who will go without care.

"These people are going to end up in emergency rooms and other places, and it's going to be much worse for our state," said Manukian, who runs an adult day-care facility in North Hollywood.

State Sen. Ted Lieu, who spoke at event at the Juanita Millender-McDonald Community Center, did his best to clear up confusion about the cuts and encourage residents to lobby Gov. Jerry Brown to at least delay their implementation.

Lieu, a Democrat from Torrance, voted against the elimination of Adult Day Health Care, which - barring court intervention or a reversal by Brown - will take place Dec. 1.

"I was raised in a culture that values respecting and taking care of our elders, and these cuts disturb me greatly," he told the group of 60 seniors and advocates who gathered for the morning discussion.

Brown cut the \$170 million program as part of a budget plan to plug last year's \$26 billion budget deficit. About 35,000 seniors, 22,000 of them in Los Angeles County, will be forced to move into nursing homes or the in-home supportive services program, or will have to find other means of care.

Adult day care provides a range of cognitive and physical therapeutic services, along with socialization, meals and exercise, for low-income elderly and disabled during daytime hours. The services cost the state \$76 a day.

Roughly \$85 million was approved to transition seniors into other managed care programs, but many said that won't be sufficient.

"Whether we're broke or not, we still have an obligation to help these people," said Al Chin, a senior advocate who spoke Monday.

Jenny Batongmalaque, medical director of the Senior Assessment Center in Carson, urged residents to write down complaints and solutions, and send them to the governor and state Legislature.

"The more people that get involved, the more chance we have of something getting passed," she said.

Many of those who attended said they were confused about which services would replace adult day care, and how seniors would go about getting enrolled in other programs.

Lieu agreed that the transition has been fraught with difficulty, and that getting out the word had proved a challenge for the state. He said he would support legislation to delay the cuts.

A hotline also has been established by the state for those with questions about the transition. Seniors and the disabled who are covered by Medi-Cal, or family members or caretakers, can call to get information at 916-636-1980.

melissa.evans@dailybreeze.com