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Penny Wise

State budget cuts end an adult daycare program, leaving Tammy Pilisuk no options to care for her ill mom.

By Tammy Pilisuk

My mom has had Multiple Sclerosis all my life. Decades of the disease have taken their toll and now mom can no longer take care of herself. Her poor memory and confusion with even simple tasks have left mom 100 percent dependent on others.

Last year, my dad got overwhelmed managing mom's care, even with home helpers. Fortunately, we found a god-send: an adult day health care center mom can attend five days a week.

Some people confuse ADHC with senior bingo. Not even close! My mom is like thousands of ADHC clients getting medically supervised daytime care. For most participants the next stop is a nursing home. Centers have nurses and physical therapists and even offer daily wheelchair-friendly transportation. For many families, ADHC is the only way the family caregiver can hold down a job.

And you don't have to be poor to attend ADHC. It's a largely affordable option -- maybe the only one -- for middle-income families. For clients on Medi-Cal the state reimburses at \$37 a day. And this subsidy has helped the centers stay open -- until now.

This summer, the governor vetoed funds for ADHC. Not a cut-back, the whole program will go. By December, centers are supposed to "transition" their patients to other services. Sadly, there are no equivalent services. One suggested alternative, In-home Supportive Services, serves only the poor, lacks medically licensed workers and offers mostly intermittent hours.

ADHC was created to save money by keeping people out of nursing homes. Compare their \$37 a day rate with around \$350 a day for a nursing home and, you know, nobody wants to go to a nursing home except as a last resort.

Have we become a society that lacks both compassion for our most vulnerable and common sense about how to balance a budget? Eliminating ADHC sure makes me wonder.

With a Perspective, I'm Tammy Pilisuk.