



April 2, 2012

Dear Stakeholders:

In just a few days, I'll be testifying and taking questions on the department's portion of the fiscal year 2013 proposed budget in the Assembly Budget Committee. As many of you know from our calls before and after the Governor's Budget Address, my previous emails, and your meetings with various staff in the divisions, this, is a good news budget. It invests in community, it makes common sense improvements to the delivery of services, it advances necessary IT infrastructure projects and it supports public/private partnerships and innovation.

The committee, scheduled for April 4th at 10 a.m. will focus on the DHS budget as it pertains to current programs and services, including Medicaid. Then, at 3 p.m., I'll be joined by the Commissioners of Community Affairs, Children and Families and Health and Senior Services to discuss the proposed restructuring of programs for seniors, women, adolescents with behavioral health needs and children with developmental disabilities.

In March, the Department recognized Developmental Disabilities [Awareness Month](#), Brain Injury [Awareness Month](#), [Gambling Awareness Month](#) and Save Your [Vision Month](#). Each of these issues received steady media attention and populated the Department's [Facebook](#) updates. In April, we'll acknowledge Autism Awareness Month. Several events will be planned, both independently and collaboratively with other state departments. We'll continue our efforts to highlight intellectual and developmental disabilities and incorporate information specific to Autism.

One activity in particular caught our interest. On April 26th at 1:15 p.m., people all around the world will participate in the [Bubbles4Autism](#) experience. Launched nine years ago by [FACES for Autism](#), this awareness campaign joins advocacy with fun by using an activity nearly everyone can enjoy, blowing bubbles. It's also a chance to help break the Guinness Book of World records for number of people simultaneously blowing bubbles.

I plan to participate and I hope that whether your organization serves individuals with autism or not, you'll think about doing this, as well. No fundraising is necessary. It's just about raising awareness and standing in solidarity on an issue that impacts so many. Registration for the event can be found [here](#).

Regards,

Jennifer Velez