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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joni and Friends Issues Action Alert in Response to Budget Cuts for Disabled Vital care programs are in danger for those who need help most

AGOURA HILLS, Calif., Jan. 31, 2011 – [Joni and Friends International Disability Center](#) is asking California residents to take action and contact their representatives this week before an important vote on budget cuts which would drastically reduce vital care to the disability community.

Facing the state's largest budget shortfall since the Great Depression, California's Gov. Jerry Brown is proposing \$12 billion in cuts overall, with \$750 million coming from community programs serving those with developmental disabilities. These cuts would undo the work of the 1977 Lanterman Act, which guaranteed the rights of individuals with developmental disabilities to needed services and care within their communities.

In addition, Gov. Brown is proposing cuts to the In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program, which provides care for about 436,000 elderly, sick and disabled people at home, usually for about \$9 to \$12 an hour. His changes would reduce the number of hours recipients can get care; eliminate many services for some recipients; and entirely cut IHSS services for some people.

The need for these services is so great that last week, California Republican and Democratic politicians stood together in protest of the cuts. They argued that the proposal is not fiscally sound, because many people may end up in hospitals or nursing homes, which would cost the state even more.

[Jeff McNair](#), Director of Public Policy for the Joni and Friends [Christian Institute on Disability](#), is encouraging individuals to get involved in this process and to let their representatives know the importance of these programs in their communities. "We need as many people as possible to call their state senators or assembly members this week, in protest of these cuts," McNair said. "And those who are able are invited to attend public hearings in Sacramento this Thursday, Feb. 3, and next Thursday, Feb. 10, to let the legislators know what the likely impact of these cuts would mean to their loved ones."

Information on the Thursday public hearings is as follows:

- Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, 9:30 a.m. or later, Feb. 3, Room 4202, State Capitol, Sacramento.
- Senate Budget Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, 9:30 a.m. or later, Feb. 10, Room 4203, State Capitol, Sacramento.

Information for contacting local representatives is provided on the Arc website, which is the national organization founded in support of individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families:

- Click on The Arc's Legislative Action Center: <http://capwiz.com/thearc/utr/1/ATZQOJCYVK/JRASOJCZAL/6365466621>.
- Enter your ZIP code and click on "Go"
- Scroll down to "State Senators," and click on it.
- Click on "contacts" and call your senator's Sacramento office (unless you know someone who works in the senator's district office).
- Do the same with "State Representatives."

"It is for times such as this that we at Joni and Friends established the Christian Institute on Disability in the first place," said Joni and Friends president and COO [Doug Mazza](#). "We recognize that there are vital societal issues facing the disability community, about which we need to be educated and inspired to act. Every state is going to be facing these same kinds of cuts this year, and I encourage everyone who cares about those who have disabilities – and all Christians who are called by God to care for their neighbors – to start researching and get on the phone and make their voices be heard."

For more than 30 years Joni and Friends has worked to accelerate ministry to the disability community, offering a wide array of life-affirming ministries to people with disabilities around the world. Joni and Friends does this through the International Disability Center; the [Christian Institute on Disability](#); international radio and television programs filled with inspirational stories; Wheels for the World, which every year sees thousands of individuals receive wheelchairs and the life-giving message of the Gospel; and Family Retreats held in the U.S. and around the world, where families affected by disability learn that they are not alone. More information can be found online at the ministry's new website, <http://www.joniandfriends.org>.

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Note to Editors: For more information about Joni and Friends or to arrange an interview with ministry representatives, please contact Melany Ethridge of A. Larry Ross Communications at 972.267.1111 or melany@alarryross.com.