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The state's Community Care Program, which provides home health care to thousands of Illinois seniors, is facing a \$140 million shortfall in funding due to the state's \$13 billion budget deficit. To gain firsthand experience of the role home health care workers provide to seniors, state Rep. John Bradley, D-Marion, spent Monday morning in Herrin shadowing Brandy Cornell, a home health care worker with Addus Health Care.

Bradley assisted Cornell and her client William Fix with day-to-day activities such as cleaning, doing dishes, taking out the trash and doing laundry.

Janna Miller, a home health care worker with Addus Health Care, said a lot of what home health care workers do revolves around helping seniors stay in their home and have the same quality of life as everyone else. Miller said she believes a tax increase would help fill the gap in funding.

Bradley said the experience gave him a greater appreciation of what home health care providers do on a daily basis to take care of people, but said he is not certain the proposed one-percent tax increase will ensure adequate funding for the program.

"The one-percent surcharge that the governor's proposing right now, \$1.7 billion would go into K-12, which is a priority, very, very important; \$400 million I'm told is going to the MAP program, that leaves less than a billion dollars in revenue to fund \$10 billion worth of programs," Bradley said. "Under that scenario programs like this, that Mr. Fix is relying on, that the home health care workers provide, there's no guarantee that they would be funded."

Bradley said as chairman of the Illinois House Revenue and Finance Committee he is trying to make sure resources aren't taken away from existing programs that are working.

"There are a lot of proposals out there to create new programs," Bradley said. "We need to make sure we're funding the programs we have, and that's not taking place. The main thing is to try to hold onto what we've got and develop a budget that is responsible, but to make sure that these programs and programs like it are protected because certainly we don't want to be cutting back services to our most needy."

Miller said Addus Health Care has approximately 1800 clients in Southern Illinois, many of which would have to move into a nursing home if they didn't have home health care providers. She said many nursing homes are already over capacity and many of her clients would refuse to move into a nursing home, leaving them in their homes without the care they need.

Bradley shadows home health care worker

By Stephen Rickerl



Above: The Southern Illinois State Rep. John Bradley, D-Marion, speaks with home health care worker Brandy Cornell and her client William Fix Monday in Herrin. Bradley spent the morning shadowing Cornell to experience firsthand the critical role of health care.

Below: John Bradley washes dishes at William Fix's residence.



"We don't need to cut the vital services to our vulnerable systems," Miller said. "Overall, what we need to do is have a fair tax increase, if we would get the tax increase then our clients can stay at home."

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