In 2006, Alabama’s mental health care system received an overall grade of D. Five years later its grade has not changed.\textsuperscript{1} Only thirty-three percent of individuals with serious mental illness receive services from the state’s public mental health system.\textsuperscript{ii} This percentage will continue to decline as public funding for mental health services continues to decrease. In the past six years, overall funding for mental health has only increased 14\% while the demand for services has increased by 44\%.\textsuperscript{iii} Further cuts would cause terrible harm to an already weakened system.

The negative impact of the $16.6 million shortfall in the mental health budget is overwhelming. Proposed cuts will reduce access to mental health care and will diminish a patient’s right to receive services in the least restrictive setting. Cuts will lead to overcrowding of state facilities with an increased cost of $18 million. The shortfall will decrease access to care for over 24,000 mentally ill individuals. The budget cuts will lead to an overall financial loss of $84.4 million for the state.

There is a need to develop a better funding mechanism in the state of Alabama in order to increase funding for mental health services. I recommended that policy makers either merge the General Fund and Education Trust Fund in order to provide growth tax revenue for all public services or reduce the earmarking of existing taxes in order to provide more flexibility in the allocation of resources.

\textsuperscript{ii} Alabama Department of Mental Health. Alabama Department of Mental Health Departmental Overview. PowerPoint Presentation to the State Legislature 2010 Regular Session. Modified August 2010.
\textsuperscript{iii} Alabama Department of Mental Health. Alabama Department of Mental Health Departmental Overview. PowerPoint Presentation to the State Legislature 2010 Regular Session. Modified August 2010.