

Department hears pleas for funding

By **Lindsay Wilkes-Edrington** | *Staff Writer*

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As a caregiver at the CSRA Area Agency on Aging, Pat Ramey has seen many local families struggle to provide services for an elderly relative.

And then there's her personal experience.

"My parents had to cash in their life savings to pay for care because keeping my father at home cost \$3,000 a month," Ms. Ramey said. "He passed away last year, but now my mother's worrying if she'll have enough money to pay for her needs. I'd like to see the state spend more money on in-home and community service programs that will help families with their care."

Ms. Ramey's petition was one of more than 15 that Georgia Department of Human Resources board members heard during a budget hearing at Augusta Technical College on Wednesday. The meeting, the last of a series of hearings the department held across the state, was designed to let the public give opinions on what services the department should fund in fiscal year 2008.

"We can put money into programs, but we have to know if they've been effective," board member Anne Mueller said. "The main thing is for us to hear the problems, and hear what people have to say about what they want done."

Advocates for local agencies such as Golden Harvest Food Bank and the Medical College of Georgia's Healthy Grandparent Program stressed their need for funding.

Robisteene Freeman told the board she would like to see more funding for post-graduation programs for special education students such as her 22-year-old daughter, Tiffany, who has cerebral palsy. Tiffany graduated this year from T.W. Josey High School's special education program, and the family is looking to place her in an adult education center.

If funding isn't available for these programs, Tiffany won't continue to learn past high school, Ms. Freeman said.

"I think she should be able to get the same things she was getting in a school setting in some sort of outside program," she said.

Ms. Mueller said the public can still submit comments to the department through its Web site, dhr.georgia.gov, or mail them to Georgia Department of Human Resources: Office of Planning and Budget Services, 2 Peachtree St. N.W., Suite 30-270, Atlanta, GA 30303-3142.

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