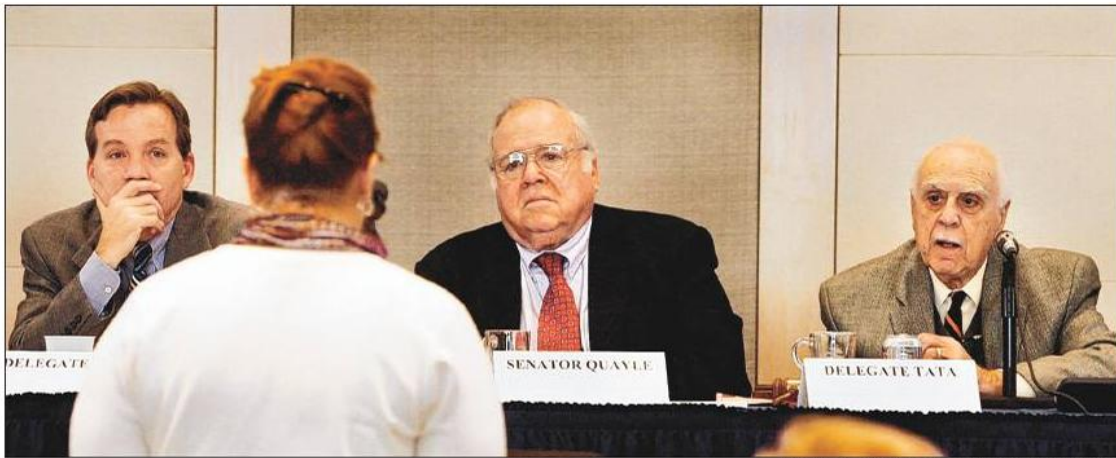


# The Virginian-Pilot

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DAVID B. HOLLINGSWORTH PHOTOS | THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

From left, Del. Chris Jones, Sen. Frederick Quayle and Del. Bob Tata listen to Chesapeake's Cynthia Mosley at Thursday's hearing.

## Proposed state cuts draw fire

*Medicaid reductions prove most worrisome to people at hearing*

By Bill Bartel  
The Virginian-Pilot

### PORTSMOUTH

Karen Jackson tried her best to make a panel of state legislators understand the possible human toll if deep cuts are made in state health care programs.

Her family has been waiting six years to qualify for a waiver that would provide money to help care for their 12-year-old autistic daughter at home. Now state officials are considering freezing the waiting list of applicants to help deal with a \$4.2 billion shortfall in state revenue.

"My husband and I have done everything that we can do. ... It's just not a bunch of numbers. We are people desperately waiting for some hope. Please don't take that hope from us," she said.

Jackson was one of scores of Virginians who warned of dire consequences Thursday if state leaders cut Medicaid services. They spoke at a public hearing on the state budget at Tidewater Community College in Portsmouth. Members of the Senate Finance and House Appropriations committees are conducting several such meetings before the General Assembly convenes Wednesday.

Del. Chris Jones, R-Suffolk, said as Thursday's hearing began that the legislators were



### the hearings

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## STATE CUTS | *Virginia is facing \$4.2 billion shortfall*

not going to make comments but were there to listen.

What they heard were forceful, mostly polite, but clearly worried private citizens and public officials describe how the impending budget cuts could hurt them or the people they serve.

Virginia Beach Sheriff Kenneth Stolle, who only last month was a state senator, warned that the millions of dollars being cut from sheriff's department

and other public safety programs would make Virginia a more dangerous place.

"I can assure you that two things will happen. There will be more victims on the streets of Virginia, and there will be more injuries to law enforcement officers," said Stolle, who estimated that the Beach jail would lose \$2.6 million in state funding under budget cuts proposed by Gov. Timothy M. Kaine.

Chesapeake Treasurer Barbara Carraway said she was

speaking on behalf of other city treasurers and commissioners of revenue in warning that reductions in state funding would mean pay cuts of 9 percent, unless cities make up the difference.

But most of the 300-plus people who filled the conference room were there to raise concerns about Kaine's proposed \$419 million in cuts to Medicaid, the program that helps pay for health care for poor, disabled and elderly people.

Proposals to cut hourly

wages of personal health care providers, freeze waiting lists for people needing special care and reduce other services would force the most fragile Virginians to bear the greatest burden, several speakers said.

"These are the people who need the money the most," said Athena Jones, a home health care worker. "These are the people who are trying to lead a life."

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