



Sowers of Justice

Catholic Legislative Network

**Action
Alert**

**Contact Legislative
Leadership: Ask Them to
Protect Health Programs and
Minnesota's Families!**

April 30, 2009

**The Time is NOW – Contact Key Legislators
to Protect Necessary Health & Human Services Programs!**

Background

Today, the House and Senate begin a Conference Committee to create a comprehensive Health and Human Services Finance Bill to send to the Governor. This is a critical time to raise your voices on behalf of people living in poverty and crisis.

First, some of the most egregious cuts included in the Governor's budget are services for those on **General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC)**. While the program itself wasn't canceled, most of the services were cut. Services cut include: inpatient hospital care, dental services, radiology, eyeglasses, occupational therapy, speech therapy, physical therapy or audiology services. This will affect 32,000 people on GAMC.

Hennepin County Medical Center estimates that the Governor's budget would have a \$50 million dollar annual impact on that facility alone. Hospitals around the state acknowledge that there are 20,000 emergency room visits for dental care each year, which will dramatically increase if people are denied less costly preventative care.

The House and Senate didn't concur with any of the Governor's cuts to MinnesotaCare or GAMC.

The Senate Health and Human Services bill, which will be conferenced with the House bill, adds 21,000 children and adults to MinnesotaCare, provides access to MinnesotaCare for children who are aging out of foster care up to age 21, and keeps many of the health services that the Governor cut.

The Senate Bill also protects mental health services from the 3% cut in Medical Assistance, as was suggested by the Governor.

Second, the House version of the bill cuts back support to Minnesota's poorest children and their families. More than 80,000 children a month rely on assistance available through the **Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)**, the state's welfare to work program. Both the Governor and the House would cut assistance to families with disabled parents and children, to families who have found subsidized housing, and to parents who have gone to work. Both proposed budgets would cut funding for the services that help parents get back to work. In total, the House bill cuts \$22 million from MFIP programs.

These cuts undermine the stated purpose of MFIP as a program that expects, supports, and rewards work. Now, MFIP just demands work. Many of the supports will be gone. Families whose earnings through work move them just a breath over the poverty line will find no transitional help to close the gap between low wages and essential needs.

The Senate, however, protects MFIP from most of the cuts included in the House bill and Governor's proposal.

Message

Legislators are faced with a series of difficult decisions right now. Any cuts to health care programs or MFIP will be painful to the expanding number of people who will need help in our current economy. However, any cuts will be made much worse if the House and Senate are unable to raise sufficient

revenue to pay for these programs. We can only protect these programs if they're sufficiently funded.

The deep cuts that the House and Senate have proposed to Health and Human Services (\$400 million in the House and \$700 million in the Senate) are based on the assumption that new revenue will be included in the final budget fix. Without added revenue through the Tax bill, these cuts will be much worse.

We believe that resolving the budget deficit through spending cuts alone will do great harm to Minnesotans and our economy. If we are to protect Minnesotans in crisis and help provide a pathway out of poverty, we must also be willing to seriously consider raising the revenue necessary to build a Minnesota that invests in the common good.

Recommended Action

Please contact the Conference Committee members below today and ask them to protect public health programs for low-income individuals and programs that support Minnesota Families.

Specifically, let them know that:

- They should continue to protect MinnesotaCare and General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC).
- They should accept the Senate language on the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP).
- As a citizen, I am willing to pay my fair share to keep painful cuts from happening to programs that assist the most vulnerable.

House Conferees:

- Representative Tom Huntley - Co-Chair (Duluth) 651-296-2228 rep.thomas.huntley@house.mn
- Representative Paul Thissen (Minneapolis) 651-296-5375 rep.paul.thissen@house.mn.us
- Representative Larry Hosch (St. Joseph/St. Cloud) 651-296-4373 rep.larry.hosch@house.mn
- Representative Jim Abeler (Anoka) 651-296-1729 rep.jim.abeler@house.mn
- Representative Karen Clark (Minneapolis) 651-296-0294 rep.karen.clark@house.mn

Senate Conferees:

- Senator Linda Berglin - Co-Chair (Minneapolis): (651) 296-4261 www.senate.mn/senatorberglinemail
- Senator Tony Lourey (Kerrick – NE MN): (651) 296.0293 sen.tony.lourey@senate.mn
- Senator Yvonne Prettner Solon (Duluth): (651) 296-4188 sen.yvonne.prettner.solon@senate.mn
- Senator Kathy Sheran (Mankato): (651) 296-6153 sen.kathy.sheran@senate.mn
- Senator Julie Rosen (Fairmont – SW MN): (651) 296-5713 sen.julie.rosen@senate.mn

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