



*Sowers of Justice*

Catholic Legislative Network

**Action  
Alert**

**Ask Minnesota's  
leadership to protect  
health care for those  
most in need!**

**April 2009**

**Make up to 5 calls to protect General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC)**

**Background:**

General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC) is a state-funded program that pays for certain health care services for Minnesota residents who are very low income and not eligible for other health care programs. Most GAMC enrollees are adults between the ages of 21 and 64 who do not have dependent children. To be eligible for GAMC, an individual would already be on General Assistance or Group Residential Housing, have less than \$1000 in assets, and have an income lower than 75% of the Federal Poverty Guideline (about \$8,122 per year for a single adult).

GAMC served, on average, almost 34,000 people per month during 2007. GAMC is 100% state funded. During fiscal year 2007, Minnesota spent \$281 million in payments to medical providers for services to GAMC clients.

Because of Minnesota's current budget crisis, GAMC is on the chopping block, and the people it serves are going to be left without critical health care services. If most GAMC services are eliminated, more than 32,000 individuals would lose access to critical health services, including in-patient hospital care, prosthetic devices, asthma-related breathing supplies, and other necessary medical care.

**Message:**

GAMC provides necessary medical services to people who don't have any other access to health care coverage.

See the other side of this action alert for a March, 2009 blog post about GAMC and the people it serves from the Catholic Charities' blog, "Raising Voices for the Common Good" (<http://cctwincities.blogspot.com/2009/04/gamc-provides-necessary-health-coverage.html>).

### Recommended Action:

Please call contact the Speaker of the House, the Senate Majority Leader, Governor Tim Pawlenty, and your state Senator and Representative.

Ask them to protect low-income Minnesotans from cuts to GAMC. Consider including a health care story from your own experience, and then ask your contact to imagine how someone without health coverage or family assistance would fare in a similar situation. and support the initiatives of the Legislative Commission to End Poverty by 2020.

- Contact Speaker of the House Margaret Anderson Kelliher by calling (651) 296-0171 or emailing [rep.margaret.kelliher@house.mn](mailto:rep.margaret.kelliher@house.mn)
- Contact Senate Majority Leader Larry Pogemiller by calling (651) 296-7809 or emailing [sen.larry.pogemiller@senate.mn](mailto:sen.larry.pogemiller@senate.mn)
- Contact Governor Tim Pawlenty by calling (651) 296-3391 or emailing [tim.pawlenty@state.mn.us](mailto:tim.pawlenty@state.mn.us)
- Find your State Representative & Senator info by calling (651) 296-2146, or by visiting [www.gis.leg.mn/mapserver/districts/](http://www.gis.leg.mn/mapserver/districts/)

*For more information:*

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### **GAMC provides necessary health coverage for those in need**

General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC) is a state-funded program that provides health care coverage to extremely low-income single adults. GAMC is at great risk of being significantly cut as the governor and legislators act to balance Minnesota's \$4.6 billion deficit.

Melody Swanson, a Catholic Charities caseworker at the Mary Hall housing program, writes:

*Several residents at Mary Hall struggle with medical and mental health problems. Recently one of our residents was suicidal and was deemed to need hospitalization to stabilize so that he would not hurt himself. He had GAMC and was hospitalized for about a week. He was much better upon discharge and no longer felt like hurting himself.*

*What would have happened to this man if he were not eligible for hospital coverage? He would have likely racked up thousands of dollars in medical bills, which would be nearly impossible for him to ever pay back. This does not make sense, as the state will end up taking the loss anyway.*

*What is to become of the thousands of people on GAMC who have medical and/or mental health issues and need hospitalization?*

It is our hope that our elected officials take great care in considering the question that Melody just posed. The need for dignified living and quality health care will not be resolved when the final budget is signed into law. The need will remain, and the coming weeks will determine if Minnesotans determine those needs worthy of a response.

*Patrick Ness  
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