

# *Public Policy Update*

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*[www.TheArcOfMinnesota.org](http://www.TheArcOfMinnesota.org)*

*From Steve Larson, Public Policy Director*



## ➤ *House Holds Hearing on Bill To Accelerate PCA Cuts (H.R. 3442)*

This past week, State Representative Larry Hosch (St. Joseph) introduced H.F. 3442. This bill would move up the effective date of cuts approved in the last legislative session to personal care attendant (PCA) services. Effective July 1, 2010, PCA recipients must be dependent in at least two activities of daily living (ADLs) or have significant behavior issues (officially called "Level One Behaviors") to be eligible for PCA services, instead of July 1, 2011 as planned under current law. H.F. 3442 would also make cuts to a number of services for older Minnesotans and require personal care attendants to pay an annual \$50 registration fee to the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Rep. Hosch stated publicly that these were not cuts he supported. He said that cuts like these needed to be discussed now, however, rather than waiting until later in the session when the disability community would not have a chance to respond to them. At a hearing before the House Health and Human Services Policy and Oversight Committee, Anne Henry (Minnesota Disability Law Center) and Brigette Menger-Anderson (Metropolitan Center for Independent Living) provided strong testimony about the harmful effects of H.F. 3442.

During his opening comments at the hearing, Rep. Hosch said it is time that education funding be put on the table for discussion about possible cuts, rather than requiring health and human services programs to take the majority of cuts. In his final comments, Committee Chair Rep. Paul Thissen stated that as difficult as this discussion was, it will only get worse due to this year's budget challenges.

H.F. 3442 passed the House Health and Human Services Policy Committee with "No Recommendation" and referred it to the House Health and Human Services Finance Committee. Look for a hearing in the Finance Committee sometime this week.

## ➤ *Community Counts! Initiative Receives Senate Hearing*

The Arc of Minnesota's Community Counts! Initiative (HF 3426/SF 3073) was heard in the Minnesota Senate State and Local Operations and Oversight Committee chaired by Senator Ann Rest (New Hope) on Friday, March 12th. The bill calls for setting statewide goals and benchmarks for services for persons with disabilities, which would be included in an annual report starting January 15, 2012. Senator Sharon Erickson-Ropes (Winona) presented the bill, sitting in for the bill's chief author, Senator Kathy Sheran (Mankato). Tim Nelson, The Arc of Minnesota Board President, testified on the purpose and importance of this bill. Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) staff members testified that they thought the bill duplicated current DHS efforts and that it would require a fiscal note as currently written. Senator Tony Lourey (Kerrick) shared comments in favor of the bill and made a motion to move the bill on to the Senate Finance Committee. The motion passed.

Before going to the Senate Finance Committee, we will meet with DHS staff to try to work out an agreement on the language in the bill. This week we will work to get a hearing in the Minnesota House of Representatives.

## ➤ *U.S. Senate Approves Bill To Extend Federal Matching Money for MA*

The U.S. Senate passed a package last week that includes extending the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) through July 1, 2011. Both Sen. Amy Klobuchar and Sen. Al Franken voted in favor of this bill (HR 4213).

The federal government pays a portion of the cost of Medical Assistance expenditures for many of our human service programs. That portion is officially called FMAP, and it was increased under the federal stimulus bill last year to help states like ours cover Medical Assistance (MA) costs during this recession. The increased FMAP will expire on December 31, 2010 if nothing is done. The Senate package with the FMAP increase must now be reconciled with the version that originally passed the U.S. House. If this package becomes law, approximately \$400 million will come to the state and help with our current budget deficit. Governor Pawlenty has included an FMAP increase in his proposal to balance the state budget this year. Contact Sen. Franken (202-224-5641) and Sen. Klobuchar (202-224-3244), and thank them for voting in favor of H.R. 4213.

## ➤ *Messages to Legislators*

In your contact with state legislators, please communicate the following messages throughout this session:

- Maintain independence of persons with disabilities.
- Cuts to human services are a form of taxation that targets our most vulnerable citizens.
- Cuts to human services create more job losses.
- Innovations in disability services will provide sustainable solutions (e.g., CDCS).

When you communicate with legislators by phone or e-mail, make sure you identify yourself as a constituent. When sending an e-mail, identify yourself as a constituent in the subject line of your message (e.g., "Protect PCA Services: A Message From A Constituent"). Legislators and their staff will more likely give your communications a higher priority if they know you live in their legislative district.

## ➤ *Tuesdays at the Capitol:*

The Arc of Minnesota, working with the Minnesota Consortium of Citizens with Disabilities, is hosting Tuesdays at the Capitol. This is a variation of the vigil we conducted for the last month of the 2009 Legislative Session, when individuals with disabilities and their allies lobbied outside the Senate and House chambers and met with their legislators.

This year, different disability organizations will sponsor each Tuesday. Arc Greater Twin Cities will sponsor tomorrow's event (March 16th). Contact Barb Kleist if you would like to participate in their event tomorrow. For more on sponsoring other Tuesdays at the Capitol, contact Anni Simons at 651-523-0823, ext. 112 or [asimons@arcmn.org](mailto:asimons@arcmn.org)