

# Public Policy Update

March 4, 2010

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From Steve Larson, Public Policy Director



## ➤ *General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC) Override Fails in House*

On Monday, March 1<sup>st</sup>, the Minnesota House failed to override the Governor's veto of GAMC by an 86-49 vote, three votes shy of the total needed. The vote fell along party lines. The Governor and state legislative leaders are meeting to reach an agreement on how to continue to provide health care to current GAMC recipients, 70% of whom have disabilities. If no agreement is reached, these GAMC recipients will be transferred on April 1, 2010 to MinnesotaCare, a more costly alternative and one that would not serve current recipients as well.

## ➤ *February Forecast Projects Smaller State Deficit*

On Tuesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, the state released its latest budget forecast. The projected deficit is now \$994 million, down from the \$1.2 billion projected in the November forecast. At a news conference, Gov. Pawlenty said he would not change his proposed cuts in response to the latest budget news, but would instead use the improved budget forecast to restore the state's cash flow account. DFL legislators are beginning work on their own budget proposal.

Given the slightly improved deficit picture, our position is that cuts to programs for persons with disabilities, particularly those that promote independence, should be less than those proposed by Governor Pawlenty on February 15. [Click here](#) for a listing of all the Governor's proposed cuts.

## ➤ *This Week's Message to Legislators*

With the state budget deficit lower than projected, our message to legislators this week is, "A lower deficit should mean fewer cuts to supports for people with disabilities." We also ask you to 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., "CDCS Works: A Message From A Constituent"). Legislators and their staff will more likely give your message a higher priority if they know you live in their legislative district.

## ➤ *Bill Notifying Parents of Student Abuse Passes House Committee*

The "Kyle Herman" bill unanimously passed the House Education Policy Committee on March 3rd. The measure is named after a nine-year-old Minnesota boy with Down syndrome whose special education teacher at his Spring Lake Park school restrained, hit, and pinched him during most of his kindergarten year. School

800 Transfer Road, Suite 7A; St. Paul, MN; 55114.

[www.TheArcOfMinnesota.org](http://www.TheArcOfMinnesota.org); [mail@arcmn.org](mailto:mail@arcmn.org); 651-523-0823 or 1-800-582-5256

officials there heard reports of the abuse but didn't tell parents Lora and Shawn Herman until April of that year, when an investigation was underway, and then didn't disclose details. The Arc of Minnesota strongly supports the bill. Go to [www.startribune.com/politics/state/86292447.html?elr=KArksUUUoDEy3LGDiO7aiU](http://www.startribune.com/politics/state/86292447.html?elr=KArksUUUoDEy3LGDiO7aiU) for more on this legislation.

### ➤ *Tuesdays at the Capitol*

The Arc of Minnesota, working with the MN 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. For more on sponsoring a Tuesday at the Capitol, contact Anni Simons at 651-523-0823, ext. 112 or [asimons@arcmn.org](mailto:asimons@arcmn.org).

### ➤ *Minnesota Lifespan Respite Summit – March 12, 2010*

Respite care continues to be an unmet need for family caregivers in Minnesota across all age groups. The MN Department of Human Services, MN Board on Aging, National Multiple Sclerosis Society (Minnesota Chapter), and AARP invite you to a working summit on Friday, March 12, 2010 from 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. It will be held at the Wilder Center, 451 Lexington Parkway North, in St. Paul. The summit will: explore possibilities for enhancing respite care services in Minnesota (for all ages and needs); provide information about the Federal Lifespan Respite Care Act, and develop a plan to prepare Minnesota to apply for federal funding. There is no charge for the event; registration deadline is March 5th. [Click here](#) to register.