

## ➤ *House and Senate Budget Targets Call for Big Cuts to Disability Supports*



Today, the Minnesota Senate and House released their committees' budget targets. The targets are the amount of money that needs to be cut from each committee's budget. The Health and Human Services Finance Committees' budget targets will be \$1.6 billion, or approximately 10% of their committees' budgets. This is more than twice the size of cuts that were in Governor Dayton's original budget proposal. Programs and services for persons with disabilities are at great risk.

The House and Senate set deadlines for all budget bills to be out of their finance committees by Friday, March 25th. Rep. Jim Abeler, Chair of the House Health and Human Services Finance Committee, announced that he will release his bill to the public on Tuesday March 22nd, take testimony on the bill on Wednesday, March 23rd, and review amendments on Thursday March 24th in preparation for passage of the bill that evening.

Senator David Hann, Chair of the Senate Health and Human Services Finance Committee, has not confirmed his committee's schedule, but we anticipate it will be on a timetable similar to Rep. Abeler's.

## ➤ *Governor Revises Budget After Improved Economic Forecast*

On February 28th, the Minnesota Office of Management and Budget released its new budget forecast. The forecast improved by \$1.2 billion, reducing the projected deficit from \$6.2 billion to \$5 billion. Gov. Dayton immediately released his revised budget proposal, which lowered the cut to the Medical Assistance budget for disability supports from 4.5% to 2% and reinstated some waiver slots. Go to [our website for an analysis](#) of the Governor's revised budget proposal

## ➤ *Your Action is Essential Next Week!*

Look for a Grassroots Action Alert from us next week. As you can see from the release of House and Senate budget targets mentioned above, this is a critical time at the Legislature. We will need you to raise your voice and share your story with your legislators more than ever. Respond to that alert when you receive it!

## ➤ *Read More on Legislative Challenges in Special Education*

This week's posting on *Capitol Focus*, our public policy blog, is written by Kim Kang, our Children's and Education Advocate (pictured right). She details our current education challenges for students with disabilities. Her posting will be on [our website](#) on Friday, March 11<sup>th</sup>. Click on the link to our blog on the home page.



## ➤ *Quality Assurance Meeting Held with DHS Commissioners*

On Monday, February 28th, DHS Commissioner Cindy Jesson and Deputy Commissioner Ann Berry attended a meeting hosted by Rep. Gene Pelowski and Senator Jeremy Miller (both of Winona). They discussed legislation being developed to implement a community-based quality assurance system. Several members of

the Region 10 Quality Assurance Commission presented and did a wonderful job of articulating the benefits of [VOICE reviews](#). A follow up meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 14<sup>th</sup> with the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner.

### ➤ *Upcoming Town Hall Forums*

The following Town Hall Forums or news conferences are currently scheduled over the next month:

- Friday, March 11<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. in Marshall. Sponsored by The Arc of Minnesota Southwest. E-mail [Lee Ann Erickson](#) for additional information, or call her at 507-235-8580.
- Thursday, March 24<sup>th</sup> 6:30 pm in Stillwater. Sponsored by Arc Greater Twin Cities. E-mail [Meredith Salmi](#) for details, or call her at 952-920-0855.
- Saturday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, 9 a.m. at the Bemidji City Hall. Sponsored by The Arc United. E-mail [Cass Robinson](#) or [William Fisher](#) , or call them at 218-759-0097 for additional details.
- Saturday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 11 a.m. at the Best Western in Mankato. Sponsored by The Arc of Minnesota Southwest. E-mail [Lee Ann Erickson](#) for additional information, or call her at 507-235-8580.
- Arc Midstate will schedule a news conference in St. Cloud in April. More details to come.