

# Public Policy Update

April 2, 2010

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

From Steve Larson, Public Policy Director



## ➤ Health and Human Services Budget Bills

The next few weeks will be critical in the development of the 2010 Legislative Session's health and human services supplemental budgets. On Wednesday March 31<sup>st</sup>, Rep. Tom Huntley, Chair of the Minnesota House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division, released this revised timetable for action the House's supplemental health and human services budget bill (note changes in dates from our March 22 *Policy Update*):

- April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 pm. - Budget released to the public; overview by committee staff.
- April 8<sup>th</sup> ó Public testimony on this bill. Contact Jan Horner to testify at [jan.horner@house.mn](mailto:jan.horner@house.mn) or 651-296-5496. Please coordinate your testimony with your chapter of The Arc and Steve Larson.
- April 12<sup>th</sup> ó Committee will review amendments and vote on the HHS budget bill.

Rep. Huntley's HHS supplemental budget target (that is, the amount he is required to cut) is \$154 million, about half of what the Governor proposed in his supplemental budget.

Senator Linda Berglin has not set a date for the release of her committee's HHS budget bill, but we can anticipate that this will happen soon. See the March 29<sup>th</sup> Action Alert about Senate HHS budget targets; go to <http://tinyurl.com/yb78rzv>

### **HOWEVER - Three factors will delay final decisions on the HHS budget. These factors are:**

- **Federal Stimulus Dollars:** The Governor, Senate, and House's HHS budget proposals are anticipating \$408 million in federal stimulus dollars, which probably will not get approved by Congress and the President until the end of April.
- **Unallotment Ruling by Minnesota Supreme Court:** If Legal Aid of Minnesota is successful in its lawsuit against the Governor's unallotment actions last year, the Supreme Court would then more clearly define the Governor's unallotment authority, and the Legislature would have to revisit the \$2.7 billion in cuts the Governor made. The Legislature could choose to endorse most of the Governor's June 2009 cuts or redo them.
- **Federal Health Care Reform:** With the passage of health care reform, Minnesota will eventually have an opportunity to refinance some state-funded programs with federal dollars or transfer individuals on programs such as MinnesotaCare to Medical Assistance. The looming question is how much of this will impact the budget decisions that need to be made by May 17, 2010 ó the date the Legislature is scheduled to adjourn.

**What could happen in April:** The House and Senate complete their HHS supplemental budget proposals and then wait to call a conference committee until the three factors above are resolved. Stay tuned.

## ➤ News Conferences

**News conference gives families a forum to share stories about state budget cuts.** The Arc of Minnesota sponsored a news conference on March 23 at the State Capitol. Three families shared their

stories of how state budget cuts have harmed them. Steve Hayes, President of Arc Greater Twin Cities (pictured on the right), talked about the toll that a nine-year wait for waived services has taken on his family. Erin and Betsy Davies shared their stories of reduced personal care attendant (PCA) hours as they raise a total of seven children, six of whom have disabilities, and one of whom will receive a 50% cut in his PCA hours. Kathy Sanders shared her difficulties in caring for her daughter with significant disabilities on half of the PCA hours that she used to receive. Seven different news media covered the event; for more on this story, go to <http://tinyurl.com/y8e8njz>. You can forward this link to your legislators to let them know how budget cuts have already impacted families. Thanks to Arc Greater Twin Cities for their help in preparing families to share their stories for this event.



***Local chapters of The Arc have scheduled their own news conferences during the month of April:***

- *Saturday, April 3 at 11 a.m. at the Moorhead Public Library.* The Arc West Central Minnesota is sponsoring this event. Contact Donna or Terry Atherton for details (1-800-411-0124).
- *Wednesday, April 7 at 9:30 a.m. in Rochester.* Arc Southeastern Minnesota will hold this news conference outside their offices. Contact JoAnn Lawler for further details (1-888-732-8520).
- *Saturday, April 10 in Farimont.* The Arc of Minnesota Southwest is finalizing the details on the time and location. Contact LeeAnn Erickson for those details (1-800-427-2895).
- *Wednesday April 14 at 11 a.m. in the Forest View Room at the Downtown Radisson Hotel in Duluth.* Arc Northland is sponsoring this; contact Lynne Frigaard for details (1-800-317-6475).
- *Wednesday, April 21, at 10 a.m. in Waite Park.* Arc Midstate is the sponsor of this news conference; contact Rita Trettel or Cindy Owen for details (1-877-251-7272).

➤ ***Other State Legislative Actions:***

- *Self Advocates Minnesota (SAM).* Congratulations to SAM for successfully lobbying to continue their funding. This past week, the conference committee met on HF 1671, and after negotiations, SAM funding was continued. Both the Senate and House passed the conference committee bill on Monday March 29<sup>th</sup>, and it awaits the Governor's signature.
- *Consumer Directed Community Supports (CDCS).* Anne Henry, Minnesota Disability Law Center, worked with representatives of Department of Human Services (DHS) to include language in the DHS Continuing Care Policy Bills (SF 2933 & HF 3234) that would require stakeholders experienced in CDCS to be included in the process for the development of individualized budgets that will be a component of the new COMPASS assessment. This new tool for assessing service budgets will start to roll out on January 1, 2011.
- *Community Counts!* We are working to include language that we have negotiated with DHS to avoid a fiscal note in the upcoming HHS Omnibus bills.

➤ ***Messages to Legislators:***

As was mentioned in the ***News Conferences*** article above, we encourage you to forward the news story about our press conference to your legislators to show the impact that budget cuts are already having on people with disabilities and their families. The link to that article is <http://tinyurl.com/y8e8njz>.

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

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

- 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. 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)

### ➤ *Thanks for Your Support and Commitment:*

We are grateful for your active involvement in our public policy advocacy activities. We welcome your financial support for those efforts, too. You can donate to The Arc of Minnesota online by going to our website: [www.TheArcOfMinnesota.org](http://www.TheArcOfMinnesota.org)