

Public Policy Update

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From Steve Larson, Public Policy Director



➤ *Health and Human Services Conference Committee Finished Omnibus Bill*

After six days of work by the Health and Human Services Conference Committee, the health and human services omnibus bill was completed at about 2:00 a.m. this morning (May 12). It was sometimes contentious and always tedious, but at least the first round is over. The bill will go to the Senate and House floors as soon as it is ready, possibly today. There can be no amendments on the floor, so there might be lots of discussion, but it will not change the bill. The Governor has stated he will veto the bill if it includes an expansion of health care coverage under Medicaid and/or surcharges, which it does.

Successes:

- Rates for providers of disability services, including waived services, day programs, and personal care attendants, were not cut (a major triumph)!
- \$100,000 in funding was included for the Region 10 Quality Assurance Project.
- State-operated dental clinics will remain open.
- Community Counts! language is included. The Arc of Minnesota and allies will produce an annual report starting in 2012 on whether Minnesota is achieving its desired goals for services for persons with disabilities.

Challenges:

- ◆ Parental fees were raised by a modest amount for several hundred middle- to upper-income families, which would raise \$500,000 per year for the state. We will provide you with more details when they become available.
- ◆ Waiver growth was limited; only six developmental disabilities waiver slots per month are available statewide.
- ◆ Physical, occupational, and speech therapies were cut slightly.
- ◆ Language mandating that autism therapies be paid for by private insurance companies failed to pass in committee on a tie vote.

As we have mentioned before, nothing is final until it is final. As the session continues to move towards its mandated May 17th adjournment, we will keep you posted on key developments.

➤ *House K-12 Education Omnibus Bill*

The House passed its K-12 education omnibus bill on Tuesday night. The key features of the bill were modest changes in alternative licensure of teachers to allow mid-career professionals an easier path to licensure. Rep. Carlos Mariani successfully advocated for an amendment for more frequent evaluations of teachers and principals.

Education issues for students with disabilities were not part of this bill.