



Sowers of Justice

Catholic Legislative Network

**Action
Alert**

Health and Human Services Budget and Policy Proposals: Devastating to those Living in Poverty

March 25, 2011

Background

Unfortunately, both the House and Senate Health and Human Services committees have proposed policy and budget proposals that will significantly change the face of Minnesota. The House bill cuts approximately \$1.6 billion from programs, while the Senate cut is closer to \$1.8 billion.

The Senate bill cuts deeper and will have an impact on many of the most vulnerable people in Minnesota. Among the more egregious proposals in the Senate Health and Human Services bill are the following:

- A dramatic restructuring of the public health programs in Minnesota: All families and children on Medical Assistance (MA) with household income above 75 percent of poverty (\$13,898 for a family of three) and all MinnesotaCare enrollees with household income above 133 percent of poverty (\$24,645 for a family of three) would lose their health care coverage and would instead be provided with a set amount to purchase coverage in the private market. These low-income individuals would likely face higher out-of-pocket costs for premiums, deductibles and copayments.

The Senate would also revive the poorly constructed General Assistance Medical Care program that was just nixed by Governor Dayton when he transferred the individuals covered by this program to Medical Assistance. This would mean that only metro area GAMC clients would get coverage as happened this past year.

The Catholic Church believes in a health care policy that reflects a respect for life, prioritizes concern for the poor, does not allow for public funding of abortion, provides universal access, and does not unfairly exclude immigrants from coverage. Access to health care flows from the sanctity of human life.

- General Assistance would be eliminated as we know it today. It would be merged with several other programs, given a \$20+ million cut, and handed in a lump sum (block grant) to counties to work with low-income single adults. Bottom line: nearly 20,000 very low-income single adults who are unable to work would likely no longer receive their monthly living allowance of \$203/month.
- The Senate bill also eliminates the Minnesota Food Assistance Program, which provides food assistance for noncitizens over the age of 50 who are not eligible for the federal food support program.

Action

Call or email your Senator and let them know that this is not the kind of Minnesota you want to live in. Of the above proposed cuts, identify which one is the most important to you personally and why. We need to find another way to work ourselves out of this budget hole without placing a disproportionate burden on those whose burden is already too heavy.

To find contact information for your Minnesota Senator, go to www.leg.mn. Enter your address under "Who Represents Me?" This will direct you to a new page with links for your elected officials. The second one on the list is your Minnesota Senator. Click that link for your senator's contact information. Feel free to talk to an aide or leave a message.

Contact Marie Reigstad, Public Policy Manager, at 651-291-4484 or marie.reigstad@cctwincities.org or Kathy Tomlin, kathleen.tomlin@cctwincities.org with any questions or to let OSJ know of any response you received.