



# TAKE ACTION!

Call to Action from the Minnesota Catholic Conference  
**Governor Pawlenty's Proposed Unallotments Harm Those  
Among Us Who Are Poor & Vulnerable**  
Please Contact Governor Pawlenty Today!

[Take Action!](#)

**"[W]e are compelled to speak with and for those among us whose voices are not always heard, and whose lives are oftentimes devalued. We are gravely concerned that our state's unbalanced budget for FY 2010-11 will be resolved by further eliminating critical services for Minnesotans with urgent needs. We fear that additional spending reductions to beneficial health care and human services programs will have detrimental consequences for those who are poor and vulnerable, and ultimately to our state."  
*Minnesota Catholic Bishops, June 12, 2009***

Prior to the announcement of Governor Pawlenty's unallotment plan, the Minnesota Catholic bishops wrote a letter to the Governor urging him not to "impose even greater hardships on those among us who are struggling to live." In the June 12 letter, the nine Catholic bishops stated, "we are compelled to speak with and for those among us whose voices are not always heard, and whose lives are oftentimes devalued. We are gravely concerned that our state's unbalanced budget for FY 2010-11 will be resolved by further eliminating critical services for Minnesotans with urgent needs. We fear that additional spending reductions to beneficial health care and human services programs will have detrimental consequences for those who are poor and vulnerable, and ultimately to our state."

In asking the Governor to uphold the dignity of every human person, the Minnesota Catholic bishops also said: "We understand that the challenges facing our state are monumental and unprecedented. However, Minnesota must not become a state where people are viewed as burdens, and merely treated as cogs in our state's economy. Instead, every state policy and program, including our state's budget, must uphold the inviolable human dignity, value and worth of every person in Minnesota."

Last week, Governor Pawlenty announced his plan to unallot \$2.675 billion in spending, including \$236 million in the area of Health and Human Services (HHS). Twenty-eight of the 39 proposed unallotments are in the area of HHS, and 21 of the 28 HHS unallotments will take effect during the first year of the biennium (July 1, 2009 - June 30, 2010) rather than the second (July 1, 2010 - June 30, 2011); thereby leaving little, if any, time for the Minnesota Legislature to respond when it reconvenes in February.

Who among us will suffer the greatest from the Governor's unallotments? Governor Pawlenty's unallotments fall disproportionately on our neighbors who are the poorest and most vulnerable - those among us who are struggling to meet basic needs. The \$236 million in HHS unallotments are in addition to the \$500 million in HHS cuts the Legislature made during session and the Governor's \$381 million line-item veto of General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC). The cuts, GAMC line-item veto and unallotments total \$1 billion in HHS reductions for FY 2010-11 - more than 20 percent of Minnesota's original \$4.8 billion budget deficit!

The Governor's line-item veto of GAMC and proposed unallotments ignore the human dignity of our poorest and most vulnerable neighbors, and will cause significant harm to those among us who we are called to place first. And, in turn, it will further weaken our state's continual pursuit of the common good. Though the Governor's plan includes several harmful unallotments, our greatest concerns are with the following proposed unallotments:

### **1. Elimination of Emergency Assistance**

On November 1, 2009, two of Minnesota's three Emergency Assistance programs will end: Emergency General Assistance (EGA) and Emergency Minnesota Supplemental Assistance (EMSA). These two critical safety-net programs provide needed assistance to Minnesotans who cannot fully support themselves, usually due to illness or disability, and who are facing an emergency that threatens their health or safety. Oftentimes related to imminent eviction, foreclosure or utility shut-off, ignored emergencies place our already struggling neighbors on the edge of homelessness. According to EGA and EMSA program guidelines, an individual is able to access emergency funds once per year. Minnesotans receiving EGA must be disabled or determined unemployable, and a single adult must have income less than \$203 per month (\$260 per month, if married); and recipients of EMSA must be 65 or older, blind or severely vision impaired, or disabled, and a single adult

living alone must have income less than \$735 per month (\$1102 per month, if married and living alone).

## **2. Elimination of GAMC Coverage on March 1, 2010**

Health insurance for "the poorest of the poor and the sickest of the sick" will end four months earlier than expected. When the Governor line-item vetoed GAMC on May 14, the program was slated to end on July 1, 2010. However, under the executive power of unallotment, GAMC will instead end on March 1, 2010. In the Governor's GAMC veto message he told the legislature that because the program ends in the second year of the biennium, they would "have an opportunity to address this change further if it chooses." This means that the Minnesota Legislature will have less than four weeks, after reconvening on February 4, 2010 to address the elimination of health care coverage for our 30,000 neighbors who are living at or below 75 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

## **3. Cutting Children & Community Services Grants**

Children & Community Services Grants provide crucial funding for counties to purchase or provide social services for seniors, adults, children and families struggling with abuse and neglect, living with a disability, mental illness or chronic health condition, or living in poverty. Additionally, these grants provide services for: pregnant adolescents, adolescent parents and their children; adults who are vulnerable and in need of protection; people over the age of 60 who need help living independently; and people with developmental disabilities. The Governor proposes cutting Children & Community Services Grants by 25 percent during FY 2010, and by 33 percent during FY 2011. These grants fund a variety of critical services: adoption, case management, counseling, foster care for adults and children, protective services for adults and children, residential treatment, services for people with developmental, emotional or physical disabilities, substance abuse counseling, transportation, and public guardianship.

## **4. Lowering Medical Assistance (MA) Asset Limits for Parents and Eliminating MA Critical Access Dental Services**

In order for parents to qualify for Medical Assistance (MA), health care services for low-income Minnesotans, they must be living at or below 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (\$22,050 for a family of four). On January 1, 2011, the MA asset limit for a single parent will decrease from \$10,000 to \$3,000, and from \$20,000 to \$6,000 for a couple. This unallotment completely undermines one of the six key challenges identified by the Legislative Commission to End Poverty in Minnesota by 2020 (LCEP). According to the LCEP, "Public assistance

programs must work to move people toward financial self-sufficiency. Too often well-intentioned programs end up having the opposite effect, especially when they lead to asset depletion as a condition for participation." Further, eliminating funding for the Critical Access Dental Provider Program will severely harm the overall health and well-being of many low-income Minnesotans. Not only will many low-income and disabled Minnesotans lose access to dental care, but many Minnesotans will be forced to visit emergency rooms for untreated dental problems. In April 2010, the dental safety net that thousand of Minnesotans rely on could be eliminated.

### **5. Requiring the Health Care Access Fund to Fund Transitional MinnesotaCare and the Outreach Incentive Program**

Transitional MinnesotaCare provides six months of coverage for low-income Minnesotans who are transitioning from GAMC to MinnesotaCare. Currently, the General Fund provides funding for the first two months of this program, and the Health Care Access Fund (HCAF) provides the remaining funding. The Governor's proposed unallotment requires the HCAF to fund the entire six months of Transitional MinnesotaCare coverage. Beginning July 1, 2009, the HCAF will need to finance an additional, and unexpected, \$37.5 million. The Minnesota Legislature created the HCAF in 1992 as a dedicated funding source for health care expansion. The HCAF is the primary source of funding for the MinnesotaCare program, which purchases health care for 118,000 uninsured, low-income, working families and adults each month. The General Fund also currently provides \$3.4 million in funding for important community-based programs that help uninsured Minnesotans apply for public health programs. On July 1, 2010, the HCAF will also need to fully fund these important outreach programs. Over the next two years not only will the HCAF need to fund an additional \$41 million for Transitional MinnesotaCare and the Outreach Incentive Program, but the HCAF will need to fund health care for an additional 30,000 former GAMC recipients.

### **6. Cutting Funding for Group Residential Housing (GRH)**

Group Residential Housing (GRH) Grants provide income supplements for room, board and other related housing services for Minnesotans whose illnesses or disabilities prevent them from living independently. There are more than 5,000 facilities in Minnesota serving people with developmental disabilities, mental illness, chemical dependency, physical disabilities, advanced age or brain injuries. Each month, 15,200 Minnesotans who are unable to live independently in the community are served through GRH. With an additional 5% cut to GRH, as is proposed

by the Governor, facilities will likely be unable to continue providing the same level of services. There is also great concern that facilities will be forced to close. As a result, many low-income Minnesotans living with disabilities will be forced into homelessness.

### **7. Cutting the Renter's Credit (*included in Tax Policy, Aids and Credits*)**

Nearly 270,000 low and moderate income Minnesotans receive the Renter's Credit - a tax refund that offsets a renters' share of property taxes. More than half of the households receiving the Renter's Credit have incomes of less than \$20,000 per year, and approximately 28 percent of recipients are seniors and individuals with disabilities. The Governor's unallotment would cut the Renter's Credit by more than a quarter; thereby substantially limiting both an important form of housing assistance and source of tax relief for many Minnesotans.

Our faith calls us to protect and support the life and human dignity of every person. We cannot stand silently by as the lives and well-being of our neighbors, who are already struggling to meet their basic needs, is threatened. We must place first the needs of those among us who are poor and vulnerable, and we must urge others to do the same. To these ends, we respectfully ask you to:

- 1. Contact Governor Pawlenty and urge him to reconsider his proposed unallotments; and**
- 2. Participate in the June 30 interfaith gathering at the Capitol (please see event details below).**

We must speak and stand in solidarity with our neighbors whose lives will be affected by the Governor's unallotments.

---

***Called to be a Faithful Minnesota: A Witness of Lament***  
**Tuesday June 30, 2009: 10:15 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

**On the morning of Tuesday June 30, Minnesota people of faith will gather for a witness of lament to urge Governor Pawlenty not to abandon Minnesotans, especially those most in need. As people of faith we can send the message that this is not the Minnesota we are called to be. It is against the teachings of all our religious traditions. We can remind Governor Pawlenty that he is Governor of all the people and plead for his care for all. Please gather at Christ Lutheran Church on Capitol Hill, 105 University Avenue, St. Paul, by 10:15 am. We will then assemble in congregational groups and process in a somber, funeral-like procession beginning at 10:30**

am. You are encouraged to wear black and bring flowers and notes to the Governor expressing your faith-based concern about these budget decisions. We will then process down Martin Luther King Blvd, cross and gather on the South steps of the Capitol. There will be baskets in which you can deposit your flowers and cards. A delegation will deliver the cards and letters to the Governor's office.

Sponsoring Organizations: Minnesota Council of Churches, St. Paul Area Council of Churches, Greater Minnesota Council of Churches, Joint Religious Legislative Coalition, Interfaith Children's Advocacy Network, Minnesota Catholic Conference, and A Minnesota Without Poverty