



Downtown Congregations to End Homelessness

Action Alert March 7th, 2010

ACTION: Call your legislators and insist, *“When you balance the State’s budget, please protect the safety net for our most vulnerable residents.”*

The Issue:

The State is faced with a \$1 billion budget shortfall. The Governor has proposed eliminating health care (GAMC), cash assistance (GA), and emergency assistance (EGA) for the poorest Minnesotans. These programs are life-saving for our poorest and sickest people, many of whom are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

Homeless Prevention efforts and Rapidly Re-housing homeless folks are two strategies in the **Heading Home Hennepin Plan** that will be greatly hindered by the loss of EGA. With the loss of EGA, people eligible for permanent housing will be unable to access funds to pay for costs of moving into housing.

Whom to Contact: Call/Email your State Legislators.

To find your Legislators, call (651) 296-2146 or visit: www.gis.leg.mn/mapserver/districts/.

Talking Points:

- **How will the loss of these programs (listed below) impact the well-being of our neighbors?** Be personal and tell your story.
- **This is a moral issue.** Talk about how your faith/values inform your insistence that basic needs are met for our vulnerable neighbors.

More about the Issues:

General Assistance Medical Care - GAMC is Minnesota’s public health insurance program for the state’s poorest adults. In 2008, more than 77,000 Minnesotans used the program – with an average of 35,000 at any given time. People who use the program live on less than \$8,000/year; 70% of them struggle with mental illness; 40% of them have chronic physical disabilities. Minnesota Care is not an appropriate alternative (as the Governor has proposed) because the co-pays/premiums are too high; many of the GAMC enrollees are homeless and have no place to receive monthly bills; and there is a 4 month wait from the point of application to get on Minnesota Care, people in crisis don’t have four months to wait. The Governor vetoed a bill that passed with overwhelming bipartisan support. The program is set to be eliminated April 1st, unless we act today. **What you can do: Ask your legislators to Save GAMC!**

General Assistance – GA is a cash grant of \$203/month for single adults who are unable to work. GA recipients are required to seek federal benefits such as disability for their longer-term sustainability, but the application process can sometimes take four years. During 2009, GA served an average of 19,092 people monthly; most of whom had no other source of revenue. The Governor’s budget eliminated General Assistance; his commissioner of human services said the GA population will have to use more “ingenuity.” **What you can do: Ask your legislators to fund General Assistance!**

Emergency General Assistance – EGA provides financial assistance in emergency situations to childless individuals, couples, or families (who are not on public assistance) who have no resources to resolve their emergency. An emergency situation is defined as a situation in which the person is without, or will lose within 30 days, a basic need item (food, clothing, shelter, utilities) which pose a direct and immediate threat to the physical health or safety of the applicant. The assistance must be temporary and is allowed only once per year. Governor Pawlenty unallotted the program beginning November 1, 2009 and has proposed to eliminate it. **What you can do: Ask your legislators to fund Emergency General Assistance!**