



DATE: February 11, 2010

TO: Members of the Minnesota House of Representatives, Members of the Minnesota Senate
and Governor Tim Pawlenty

RE: **Elimination of General Assistance Medical Care will make poverty worse and negatively impact all of us!**

We write to you as you are immersed in a challenging 2010 legislative session during a recession and a difficult economy with the strong and deep conviction that as we seek long-term pathways to lift people out of poverty we do not make decisions that make their lives harder. We are grateful for the care you exercise for the lives of people in this state. You, who give leadership in the public arena, and we, in the religious arena, share a common commitment to the health and well-being of the communities in our care.

The elimination of the General Assistance Medical Care program, effective April 15th, will mean nearly 35,000 extremely low income adults will be without basic physical and mental health care at any given time. Most are men (60%), most struggle with mental illness and/or chemical dependency (70%), many have chronic disabilities (40%), and are homeless (25 - 40%). Many of the adults who qualify for GAMC are living on \$203 per month (maximum of \$677 per month). This is nowhere near enough income to pay for basic necessities or health insurance premiums. We urgently ask you to reconsider this decision.

The resilience and life of a community and the measure of our moral fiber as a people depends on the way we treat those who are most vulnerable. The task before you isn't only about creating and balancing a budget, but also about shaping the kind of state we want to be and the kind of human community we hope to create. We ask that you enlist all of us in this effort. Invite us to invest in this state, tighten our belts, and contribute our time and resources. We're not afraid of fair and equitable tax increases if it means people who get sick can get health care, the hungry are fed and the most vulnerable are cared for.

Allow us to be a part of determining a future for Minnesota in which the dignity and value of each one of us is upheld. The challenge is not just yours – it's *ours*.

Sincerely,

Bishop Thomas Aitken
Northeastern Minnesota Synod

Bishop Craig Johnson
Minneapolis Area Synod

Bishop Harold Usgaard
Southeastern Minnesota Synod

Bishop Jon Anderson
Southwestern Minnesota Synod

Bishop Peter Rogness
Saint Paul Area Synod

Bishop Lawrence R. Wohlrabe
Northwestern Minnesota Synod