Targets to launch the numbers game

A potential spending outline that would use up most if not all of the state’s record surplus is on the table as lawmaking nears halfway point of the 2023 regular session.

Gov. Tim Walz and legislative leaders announced the framework in late March. The proposal would increase the state budget by almost $17.9 billion over the next two years, and would represent a plus-30 percent hike in the state’s $52 billion biennial budget.

Key unusual for spending targets to be announced at this point in a legislative session. Typically targets are released later on. House Speaker Melissa Hortman (DFL-Brooklyn Park) said the timing to get targets to committees and department leaders sooner.

The announcement has disability advocacy groups and individuals combing through the details, to see what could be included. Human services has a $1.3 billion target, with a health and human services target at $755 million.

With so many bills and competing interests at the capitol, this session, it’s inevitable that not everything will make it through the process. There are already calls for more human services spending beyond what is proposed.

The budget agreement was reached by Walz, Hortman and Senate Majority Leader Kurt Duzedix (DFL – Minneapolis). Republicans immediately criticized the proposal, saying it is too large and calling it a spending spree.

At a March 21 news conference, Walz said, “Government can work together for the people. We can reach compromises. We can get our work done on time, and we can deliver a budget that Minnesotans can be proud of.”

Much focus is on education, with state public schools tabbed for an additional $2.2 billion more over the next two years, with $850 million more for higher education. The children and families target is $1.17 billion (HHS – children and families, $875 million, early education at $300 million).

The proposal also contains $1 billion for housing, and $670 million for a statewide paid family and medical leave program. Tax relief is also a big focus with $3 billion.

A complete list of targets is at https://www.house.mn.gov/SessionDaily/Story/17838

Legislators passed the second bill deadline March 24, and have a third and final deadline April 4. The session ends May 22. The budget year begins with $3 billion.

The overriding message March 9 was to break down barriers to care, were also emphasized.

A large and enthusiastic group of advocates attended 2023 Mental Health Day on the Hill March 9, glad to be back in person after two years of virtual events. Hundreds of people filled a church sanctuary and the capitol rotunda, to hear updates and speakers. They discussed 18 comprehensive mental health bills which they say would solve many problems if passed.

They also gave legislators tiny foam bricks, to indicate the importance of building a quality mental health system. “The mental health system was never broken. It was never built,” said Sue Abderholden, executive director of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) Minnesota.

The Mental Health Legislative Network represents more than 40 organizations. Members said they are confident they’ll enjoy some success this session.

A message from several speakers is that mental health service needs have increased, in some cases dramatically, in recent times. The American Academy of Pediatrics recently declared a national emergency in child and adolescent mental health.

In some cases, services must be created. For others, such as the 988 crisis line, adequate resources are needed. The overriding message March 9 was how missing pieces in the current mental health system affect Minnesotans, and how employment, housing and health needs are among issues tied to improving mental health.

Speakers discussed the disconnect between some services, the long waits for services, the
Consider rights of the disabled before allowing assisted suicide

Legally, physician-assisted suicide differs from euthanasia. Euthanasia is defined as the act of assisting people with their death in order to end their suffering, but without the backing of a controlling legal authority. We worry that it’s too easy to confuse the two.

Our search for topics for the History Note is often an entertaining trip back in time. It’s often cause to reflect on the long-time role of middle-class and wealthy women in helping the earliest disability service groups. Women who didn’t have to work outside of the home joined clubs focused on civic betterment, benevolent efforts, philanthropy and early disability advocacy.

Our History Note has described how fundraising itself has crumbled under the weight of the Great Depression. At the time of the Foshey, mail fraud charges, Foshey, who made his fortune in utilities, phoned the acknowledged officials of Access Press and himself in his namesake tower. He invited 25,000 guests to the dedication ceremony in 1929 and gave each a gold pocket watch. Weeks later, the Foshey business empire was sold out, and Foshey never lived in his beautiful suite.

The 32-story building is on the National Register of Historic Places and is hailed as a fine example of Art Deco architecture. It is considered to be Minneapolis’ first skyscraper, and it is now the W Hotel Minneapolis.

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Advocates are being urged to continue contacting legislators about their priorities, to make sure issues are included in larger bills. Advocacy groups continue to post legislative updates, so those are great sources of information. The Minnesota Council on Disability offers updates as well as a bill tracker. Several news media outlets also offer bill trackers.

Editor Jane McClure compiled the March legislative coverage.
Judy Heumann leaves us with a lasting legacy of leadership, activism

by Taryn M. Williams

It is often said that true leaders don’t build followers, they build more leaders. This is true—and I believe strongly that is—there is no greater example of a leader than Judyth (Judy) Heumann, who passed away on March 4 at the age of 75.

Judy’s impact was profound. Her name is intertwined with the disability rights movement, and her activism embedded in nearly every policy advancement for people with disabilities in America.

We welcome your letters and commentary

Access Press welcomes letters to the editor and commentary pieces related to issues of interest to Minnesota’s disability community. Letters should be no more than 500 words, with a maximum of 2 per commentary. Ask the editor if more space is needed.

With respect to news coverage of a Minnesota woman’s fight to overturn a guardianship and leave a hospital, we are in a crisis of human rights.

The Minnesota Statewide Independent Living Council (MNSILC) provides leadership, planning and policies necessary to provide independent living services to people with disabilities. We want to take a moment to provide our viewpoint.

Independent living is more than a philosophy, it is a way of life. Independent living is having opportunities to make decisions that affect one’s life, able to pursue activities of one’s choosing, consider treated only in the same ways that one’s nondisabled neighbors are limited.

Basic physiological needs including accessible housing, health care, staffing, food and so much more are not being provided despite federal and state programs. The ability to thrive includes financial stability, employment, education, belonging and so much more is not accessible without recognizing the systemic barriers in the disability services, health care, transportation, public health, and more.

We want all to “live their best life” as just one of so many examples, Judy helped lead the historic 1977 “Disability Crip Camp” at the San Francisco Federal Building. This demonstration resulted in the long-awaited signing of regulations implementing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973—the 50th anniversary of which we are recognizing this year.

Guardianship fight indicates Minnesotans face a human rights crisis

There are options to help, their resources are stretched, but they are available.

- Centers for Independent Living (CIL) are out there. All 87 counties of Minnesota are regionally served by a local, independent 501c3 non-profit organization of people with disabilities for people with disabilities. They serve people who identify a barrier to accessing an independent life defined on their terms. You can search for your local center at the MACIL website.

- Online resources like Disability Hub provide links and tips for everything from health to money and work.

MNSILC’s message:

We want it well-known what independent living is and its criticality in the health and well-being of all involved. We want everyone who plays a role in making the world a better place for people with disabilities.

We want it well-known that providing the greatest amount of resources to people with disabilities.

- To those in hearings, presiding over cases, representing individuals - take the time to educate yourselves fully on what is available, exhaust all options for providing what is available.

Access Press asks that letters and guest commentaries be specifically written for the newspaper. Letters must have a focus on accessibility issues and ideally, a focus on those issues as they affect Minnesotans. Form letters will not be published.

Letters and commentaries reflect the view of the editors and not the views of the staff and board of directors of Access Press.

Letters should be no more than 500 words, with a maximum of 2 per commentary. Ask the editor if more space is needed.

Here’s an important reminder during an election year. Because Access Press is a non-profit publication and must follow regulations on political partnerships, political endorsement letters are not published. That is true for candidates’ endorsements as well as for ballot questions.

Before making a submission, writers are always encouraged to contact the newspaper to discuss ideas or to ask questions about From Our Community submissions, at 651-644-2133 or access@accesspress.org.

Let the newspaper staff know if accommodations are needed to submit a letter or commentary, and we will help you.

Deadline for the print edition of the newspaper is the 15th of each month, with publication the following month.

The Olmstead Implementation Office

Minnesotans with disabilities should be living, learning, working, and enjoying life in the most integrated setting of their choice. The Minnesota Olmstead Plan is a set of goals to help us get there.

Learn more about the Olmstead Plan:

mn.gov/olmstead

We want you to have a voice in the conversation of Independent Living. Let us know your thoughts, and we will be sure to share them with the public.

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Deaf Minnesotans seek improved access to education and entertainment

by Sonny Wailowski

In recent years, there has been a growing movement to improve the lives of deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing Minnesotans. Several bills before the 2023 Minnesota Legislature would help our community with communications and information access.

Rep. Brian Danielz (R-Faribault) is the deaf Daniels has spoken about how his son’s disability has shaped his views on disability rights.

One of the most important issues facing deaf and hard of hearing Minnesotans is access to education. Many deaf and hard of hearing students struggle in traditional public schools, and they often fall behind their hearing peers. HF 0612 would ensure that all children have access to language and the acquisition of language, such as teaching American Sign Language (ASL) to a deaf child.

Another important issue facing deaf and hard of hearing Minnesotans is access to communication. Many deaf and hard of hearing people have difficulty communicating with hearing people, and they often feel isolated and alone.

HF 0842 would require school districts to provide direct instruction to students who are deaf or hard of hearing by teachers who are licensed to teach. This bill would help to ensure that deaf and hard of hearing students have access to quality education.

HF 0909 would require televisions in public spaces to have closed captions readily enabled within its settings. This would help to ensure that deaf and hard of hearing people have access to information and entertainment.

HF 1282 creates a board of sign language interpreters and transliterators with rulemaking authority to have license(s) required. This would help to ensure that deaf and hard of hearing people have access to quality interpretation services.

These four bills are important because they would help to improve the lives of deaf and hard of hearing Minnesotans. By providing access to education, communication and information, these bills would help to ensure that deaf and hard of hearing Minnesotans can live full and independent lives.

The bills are also important because they would help to raise awareness of the needs of deaf and hard of hearing Minnesotans. Many people are not aware of the challenges that deaf and hard of hearing people face. These bills would help to educate the public about these challenges.

The bills were among issues covered at the Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing Advocacy Day at the Capitol March 7.

Editor’s note: Wailowski is a self advocate from Faribault. He attended the Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing Advocacy Day at the Capitol March 7.

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for our accessible waiting lists at the following affordable communities:

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<th>Community</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Unit(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Albright Townhomes</td>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
<td>612-824-6665</td>
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<td>Cornerstone Creek Apartments</td>
<td>Golden Valley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diamond Hill Townhomes</td>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
<td>612-730-3941</td>
<td>2 &amp; 3 BR</td>
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<td>Epic Park Apartments</td>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
<td>613-336-7106</td>
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<td>Franklin Lane Apartments</td>
<td>Apple</td>
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<td>1 &amp; 2 BR</td>
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<td>Minneapolis</td>
<td>612-392-8497</td>
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<td>Hilltop Manor</td>
<td>Eau Claire</td>
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<td>Lincoln Place Apartments</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Eden Prairie</td>
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<td>Raspberry Ridge</td>
<td>Hopkins</td>
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<td>Spirit on Lake</td>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talisman Green</td>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
<td>612-627-0417</td>
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<td>Trinity Apartments</td>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utopia Place</td>
<td>Brooklyn Center</td>
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<td>Willow Apartments</td>
<td>Park Rapids</td>
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<td>Woodland Court Apartments</td>
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  - www.mn.gov/deaf-commission

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  - F: 952-229-4468
  - www.reachforresources.org
Grant program’s focus is opioids

As opioids continue to devastate people and families across Minnesota, a new set of state grants focuses on communities bearing the greatest burdens of the crisis. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has awarded 28 grants totaling $35 million to expand treatment and recovery services in 15 counties across the state.

The grants support community and residential treatment programs, and more education for opioid treatment professionals.

The new grants will support culturally centered, trauma-informed and culturally responsive programs.

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The 2023 Minnesota State High School League’s adapted floor hockey state championship games may have had Parker wondering if they had traveled back to 2022. Both FH and CI division title games were a repeat match for the teams. But the outcomes would not be the same.

**CI Division**
The Burnsville/ Farmington/Lakeville Blazing Cats avenged last year’s state title loss in the CI championship, topping the Trojans of New Prague/Tri-City United/ LeSueur-Henderson/Belle Plaine/Jordan, 15-6.

The win gave the Blazing Cats their first state championship in school history.

The Blazing Cats opened up the title game after a close first period. The second period ended 12-5 and there was no looking back. Several Blazing Cats scored more than once. Caden Roseth led all scorers with nine goals. Teammate Riley Deutsch recorded a hat trick and senior Clarke Ruhlman was the final Blazing Cat with a goal giving him a scoring twice for the Trojans. Aaron Adamson finished with three goals and Raymond Parker had two.

The Blazing Cats got to the title game by topping White Bear Lake Area and Maple Grove. Maple Grove defeated Dakota United, 6-5, for third place. Crimson senior Goetzto Sanders would be successful in overtime, scoring with 1:32 left in the five-minute period.

The Stillwater/Mahometi Ponies claimed the CI consolation crown with a 6-1 win over the North/Tartan Polars. Mason-Mora Clark led scoring for the Ponies with five goals.

The St. Cloud Crunch was the eight team in the tournament. The team is made up of athletes from St. Cloud Apollo, Sauk Rapids-Rice, St. Cloud Tech and Sartell high schools.

All-tournament team members were Aaron Blood, Clarke Ruhlman and Angel Fingola. Burnsville/Farmington/Lakeville; Ada Kramer and Thomas Christoperson, Dakota United; Alec Singh and Gaetao Sanders, Maple Grove; Landon Malecha, Aaron Adamson and Trystan Seger, New Prague/TCU/LSH/Belle Plaine/Jordan; Kaylee Laros, North/Tartan and Mason-Mora. Mora Clark, Stillwater/Mahometi.

The CI Division is for student-athletes with cognitive disabilities.

**PI Division**
The Brainerd Warriors came away with the title, their sixth state championship and their first since 2019. The Warriors defeated the Hawks of Dakota United, 4-3, in overtime.

Seventh-grader Aiden Olsen scored the game-winning goal about a minute into OT. It was a good game and very exciting for spectators.

Brainerd defeated the St. Paul Humboldt/Anoka-Hennepin Mustangs to reach the title game. The Robins of Robbinsdale/Hopkins/ Mountain View defeated the Anoka-Hennepin, 5-2, for third place. Jose Leon Estrada helped lead the Robins with four goals. The Robins overcame a 0-2 deficit to fly back in the second period.

Maple Grove topped Rochester, 9-8, for the consolation title. Rochester led 6-3 at one point, but a third period comeback was topped by the game-winning goal from seventh-grader Lincoln Seacry. Seacry finished the game with six goals. Teammate Ben Pfeifer chipped in with the other three for Maple Grove.

The Minneapolis South Tigers were the other team in the tournament. PI all-tournament team members were Joey Tonna and Sophia Reithor, Anoka-Hennepin; Owen Olsen, Andrew Kargel and Cadence Atwater, Brainerd; Jar Bahna, Fiona Sitzmann and Cayden Needham, Dakota United; Bryan Lopez, Dylan Larrick, Brandon Needham and Leon Estrada, Robbinsdale/Hopkins/ Mound Westonka; and Joe Hansen, Rochester.

The PI Division is for student-athletes with physical disabilities.

The tournament was hosted by Bloomington Jefferson High School.
Mingo led life of devotion

Robert Mingo lived for many years with facioscapulohumeral muscular dystrophy (FSHD), working to educate with facioscapulohumeral muscular dystrophy (FSHD), working to educate...
Grant assistance available
People who receive home and community-based waiver services (HCBS) can take advantage of a new grant program for services from LiveLife Therapy Solutions, a Minnesota assistive technology company. The grant program, called AT for Wellness, is available through March 2024. It is designed to help people who currently receive HCBS waiver services to obtain equipment and confidence to help them access telehealth and/or social engagement. Some examples include access to online classes, educational programs, supervised activities, community engagement and remote healthcare appointments.

LiveLife Therapy Solutions can help with purchasing Internet services and equipment that are typically denied by waiver or cannot be covered, like tablets and computers, to allow people to access telehealth services. The company has also been able to purchase computer desks, office chairs, mounts, adaptive mice, and keyboards. This grant is also able to assist if the person has remote technologies but does not know how to set them up or use them, to cover that time up for training.

To receive a free monthly events calendar or email with free resources and/or information, contact info@mnaccess.org. Ask for the entire events list or specific lists for ASL interpreting, captioning, audio description, sensory-friendly accommodations or disability-related topics.

For other accessibility resources or upcoming webinars presented by MNAA, sign up for emails at https://mnacess.org.

 OPPORTUNITIES

Conference
Down Syndrome Association of Minnesota annual conference, retreat
The Down Syndrome Association of Minnesota (DSAMN) hosts its annual statewide learning conference and self-advocate retreat Sat, April 22 at the Mpls Northwester Marriott in Brooklyn Park. Preregister for either the self-advocate retreat or the caregivers retreat. Costs vary. FFI: https://interland3.dorumperfest.net/weblink/weblink.aspx?name=E11535&id=135

Children and families
PACER workshops sampling
PACER Center offers many useful free or low-cost workshops and other resources for families of children with any disabilities.

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For other accessibility resources or upcoming webinars presented by MNAA, sign up for emails at https://mnacess.org.

HeyPeers. HeyPeers provides a safe, easy access to environment exclusively designed for online support group meetings.

The classes and online support groups are designed for family members and caregivers, persons living with a mental illness, service providers, and also the general public. Find a complete listing of these classes and information on how to join at naminn.org and clicking on “Classes” or go straight to https://naminn.org/education-public-awareness/classes/scheduled/.

Volunteer
Be a speaker
The Spina Bifida Resource Network (SBRN) seeks speakers with lived disability experience for its Empowered Conversations virtual speaker series.

The weekly, interactive event by and for adults with disabilities features diverse speakers, movement artists and other discussion leaders. The program has been offered free to participants nationwide since March 2020.

Speaking engagements are held Wednesday 7-8 p.m. ET via Zoom with auto captioning. This includes a 5-min intro, 45-min session and 5-10 min Q&A. FFI: amandak76@gmail.com.
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