



Minnesota Public Health Association

MPHA 2010 Legislative Summary

Overview

This document provides a brief summary of key public health bills introduced during the 2010 Minnesota legislative session. Following a brief summary of the legislative session, the document includes two main sections: the first focuses on topic areas identified as high priority issues for MPHA in 2010, while the second section highlights additional public health legislation that may be of interest to MPHA members.

Session summary

Minnesota began the 2010 legislative session with a projected \$1.2 billion budget deficit in a difficult economic climate with high unemployment rates and reductions in state tax revenue. Despite these looming problems, lawmakers went to work early to pass a \$680 bonding bill and other key legislation. However, late in the session, a series of events led to a ballooning budget deficit. First, concerns grew that \$408 million in federal funding would not become available in time to help balance the state budget. The passage of federal health care reform led to debate as to whether Minnesota should further increase the state deficit in order to participate in a new Medicaid program that would require \$188 million of state resources to obtain \$1.4 billion of federal dollars. Then, only 11 days left in the session, the Minnesota Supreme Court ruled Governor Pawlenty had exceeded his statutory authority when making unallotments at the close of the 2009 session to balance the budget. The \$2.6 billion unallotments included significant cuts to human services and local aid to counties.

The Legislature's first attempt to balance the budget contained new tax revenues and was vetoed by the Governor. The final bill, essentially ratifying the unallotments proposed by the Governor during the preceding session and delaying payments to balance the budget, was passed in a 1-day special session on May 17th.

The Legislature will reconvene on January 4, 2011 with new gubernatorial leadership and many changes in the House and Senate. They will face the challenge of balancing a looming projected budget deficit of \$5.8 billion in Fiscal Years 2012-13.

High priority legislation

Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) preservation

Bill status: FUNDING MAINTAINED. SHIP funding was not reduced for FY 2011, despite the Governor originally proposing a \$10 million reduction. Funding for this initiative is set to expire in July of 2011 unless an ongoing funding source is identified.

Childhood obesity prevention – Improved PhyEd standards (HF3115/SF2753)

Bill status: PASSED. The new law will ensure more kids are provided quality physical education by enacting statewide standards. The bill also asks that the Minnesota Department of Education track the phy ed classes offered at schools around the state and asks them to make recommendations for how to use recess time to encourage more physical activity so that kids can get their recommended 60 minutes/day. The bill promotes transparency and promotes a discussion about these issues by creating a Healthy Kids Awards program that will recognize schools for promoting physical activity and better school nutrition. Finally, federally required school wellness policies will now be posted online so that all parents can monitor and participate in the implementation of their school's wellness plans. *MPHA was a member of the Minnesotans for Healthy Kids Coalition, which worked to pass this bill.*

Childhood obesity prevention - Complete Streets (HF2801/SF2461)

Bill status: PASSED. The Complete Streets legislation encourages, but does not require, local governments to consider policies that are designed to be safe and accessible for all users, including drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. This legislation also directs the Minnesota Department of Transportation to report progress on Complete Streets implementation to the legislature. *MPHA was a member of the Minnesotans for Healthy Kids Coalition, which worked to pass this bill.*

Ensuring access to health care services – General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC)

Bill status: COMPROMISE BILL PASSED. A new Coordinated Care Delivery System (CCDS) program will replace GAMC on July 1, 2010. Under this bill, CCDS hospitals will receive a set sum to provide preventative care, doctor visits, tests, and procedures to a limited number of patients at a reduced reimbursement rate. Thus far, only four hospitals (HCMC, University of Minnesota, Regions, and North Memorial) have signed up as CCDS hospitals. A small pool of money will be available for non-CCDS hospitals to provide emergency care and stabilization services for other GAMC patients, while clinics who see GAMC patients will not receive reimbursement. The total cost of the new program is \$164 million, less than half of cost of the original GAMC program. *In 2010, MPHA signed on as a member of the GAMC Alliance.*

Reducing youth access to tobacco – Tobacco Modernization and Compliance Act (HF3467/SF3055)

Bill status: PASSED. This new law will ensure that the new dissolvable tobacco products that are candy flavored and resemble mints and breath strips are taxed and regulated as tobacco products; require all tobacco products to be sold behind the counter and ensure youth do not have easy access to these products; and prevent the sale of new tobacco products and e-cigarettes to youth. These changes will help ensure that this generation of kids are not exposed to these new products and will have a direct impact on tobacco use among kids. *MPHA supported this bill, brought forward by a coalition of tobacco control organizations.*

Other current MPHA issues

Maintenance of local public health funding

Bill status: FUNDING MAINTAINED. Although initially proposed in the Senate, no reductions were made to local public health funding in FY 2011. Emergency preparedness funding for outbreaks of communicable diseases also remained stable.

Green Chemistry (SF2150)

Bill status: PASSED. This legislation, included in the Omnibus Work Force Development bill, will define and add “green chemistry” to the definition of “green economy” in statute. This will allow green chemistry companies to access development programs. *MPHA is an active member of the Healthy Legacy coalition, which sponsored this bill.*

Green Cleaning in Schools and Public Buildings (SF2593/HF2968)

Bill status: DID NOT PASS. This legislation would require schools and public buildings to use green cleaning products, when available and financially competitive. The bill was introduced but did not meet the first committee deadline. *MPHA is an active member of the Healthy Legacy coalition, which sponsored this bill.*

Responsible Family Life and Sexuality Education (HF2986/SF2645)

Bill status: DID NOT PASS. Although this bill which requires standards for sexuality education grades 6-12 in Minnesota public schools did advance through some committees, it was stalled at the House Floor and Senate Health, Housing, and Senate Education Committee. The bill includes: 1) age-appropriate, medically accurate education with an abstinence-first approach while also providing information about contraception and disease prevention; 2) include parents in the development of curriculum standards at the district level; and 3) allows parents to exempt their children from participating in all or part of the curriculum. *MPHA continues to support this legislation and is a member of the Coalition for Responsible Sex Ed.*

Additional public health policy topics

NOTE: MPHA did not take a position on the bills included in this section. However, they are bills that may be of interest to MPHA members.

Cadmium ban in children’s jewelry (SF2150)

Bill status: PASSED. The Omnibus Work Force Development bill included language prohibiting cadmium in children’s jewelry exceeding 75 parts per million. Cadmium is a toxic metal and a probable human carcinogen. Human exposure is linked with adverse effects on reproduction, development, and the brain.

Mandatory reporting requirements for pregnant women (SF2695/HF3059)

Bill status: PASSED. Reporting requirements related to pregnant women’s use of marijuana and alcohol was modified to reduce barriers to accessing early prenatal care.

Protections for public health volunteers (SF2555/HF2709)

Bill status: PASSED. This law provides volunteers and entities with immunity from civil charges when assisting state or local government during an emergency or disaster.

Blood lead guidelines (HF0419/SF0522)

Bill status: PASSED. The Commissioner of Health must revise the clinical and case management guidelines to include recommendations for follow up services when a child's blood lead level exceeds five micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood by January 1, 2011.

Health inequities data collection (HF2614/SF2337)

Bill status: PASSED. The commissioners of health and human services are charged with developing a current inventory of health-related data with socioeconomic variables (i.e., race, ethnicity, primary language) and develop recommendations on ways to collect high quality data. This enhanced data is intended to lead to improved discussion and recommendations on ways to reduce health disparities.

Alcohol tax increases (HF1996 and HF2125)

Bill status: DID NOT PASS. Two bills were introduced to increase the alcohol excise tax to help recover cuts to health and human services, as well as other departments and prevention activities. Neither bill was passed.

Smoking ban in vehicles with children (HF379)

Bill status: DID NOT PASS. A bill allowing law enforcement officers to issue citations for smoking in vehicles where children are present was introduced and received an informational hearing, but was not pushed further during the 2010 session. Citations could only be given if the vehicle is stopped for another violation.

For more information

For additional information about these bills and other public health legislation, we suggest reviewing the following legislative summaries:

House Session Weekly

<http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/sessionweekly/>

Minnesota Department of Health

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/opa/2010legsummary.pdf>

Local Public Health Association

<http://www.lpha-mn.org/Platform/2010%20Legislative%20Session%20Summary.pdf>

Our appreciation is extended to committee members and coalition partners who monitored legislation throughout the session, kept us informed of key votes, and provided information used in this legislative summary.

