

June 12, 2009



The Honorable Tim Pawlenty, Governor of Minnesota
Office of the Governor
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Pawlenty:

As the Catholic bishops of the State of Minnesota, we are writing you today on behalf of our sisters and brothers throughout this State who are hungry, unemployed or homeless, struggling to move out of poverty, living in or transitioning out of foster care, or living with severe disabilities or mental illness. Having responsibility before God for their spiritual well-being, we cannot overlook their physical welfare. Therefore, 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. Minnesota must not impose even greater hardships on those among us who are struggling to live.

The foundational value that must be upheld is the dignity of *every* human person. 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.

During this past session we wrote to the Minnesota State Legislature and urged them to place the needs of those living in poverty at the center of their economic decisions. We asked them to, "ensure that our state has sufficient revenue to meet the needs of Minnesotans, especially those among us who are poor and vulnerable, since they will be most affected by your decisions." Further, we provided three principles to guide their budgetary decisions: to consider the human consequences of each decision; to place first, never last, those who are poor and vulnerable; and to build on our interconnectedness. We now ask you to be mindful of these same principles.

As you know, Governor Pawlenty, the Lord Jesus teaches us to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. This especially applies to the poor and vulnerable among us. May God bless and guide you as you continue to lead our state during this challenging time.

+ John J. Stankiewicz + Michael J. McGreevey James B. Bissonette
+ John M. LeVoire
+ Harry J. Flynn + Victor H. Bolke + John M. Zuman
+ Bernard J. Janssen