Speaking Points: Disability Services and the 2009 Legislative Session

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• The needs of individuals with disabilities are often long term and complex. However Minnesota has always prided itself on providing every citizen access to a quality life, and where else would we wish to see a significant portion of our spending focused than on the quality of life we provide to some of our most vulnerable citizens?

• It is important to examine the true value of these programs in the lives of individuals with disabilities. These are programs that are enabling individuals with disabilities to gain access to the most basic components of a quality life. These programs allow individuals with disabilities to participate in community life, and choose how and where they work, play, learn and live.

• Eliminating or decreasing funding for services for individuals with disabilities is often penny wise and dollar foolish for the state. These programs and services allow individuals to function as contributing community members. Without access to these programs and services, individuals with disabilities face alternatives that cost the state a great deal more. These alternatives include nursing home placements, contraction of preventable medical conditions, and inability to remain employed and pay taxes.

• Many programs and services for individuals with disabilities require an individual to be hired to provide the services, and many of these programs are funded by a matching grant from the federal government. By decreasing or eliminating these services and programs, MN is turning away federal money that could be used to provide more jobs for MN residents in this troubled economy.

•"Disability" can happen to anyone, at any time and at any place. Disability is as much a part of life as is birth and death. If you live long enough, your odds for acquiring one or more medically-based limitations increase exponentially. Put yourself in the place of a person with a disability. Would you want to live in a nursing home if you could live in the community and especially if you could stay in your own home? State funding makes staying in your own home or community a possibility for thousands of Minnesotans who are just like you. Cut funding for needed home and community services and you undercut the very resources even you might need one day.