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Dear Rep. Brynaert,

We are writing you today on behalf of the Minnesota Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (MN-CCD). MN-CCD is a broad-based coalition of more than 100 organizations of persons with disabilities, providers and advocates, dedicated to improving the lives of people with disabilities.

Perhaps you saw coverage in the media or read about our recent rally that took place on Saturday, March 7th, on the front lawn of the State Capitol. Or perhaps you heard about the rally from a colleague, or you were able to attend in person. If you were fortunate enough to be able to attend the rally in person, you know what a powerful sight it was. We had nearly 1,500 individuals with disabilities, older Minnesotans, family members, friends and community members travel to the capitol on a cold Saturday in March to express our hope for a state budget that protects Minnesota's most vulnerable citizens from devastating cuts to the essential services they rely on to remain living in our communities. Here are the links to some of the news coverage the rally generated: <http://wcco.com/politics/disability.programs.cuts.2.953001.html>, http://www.kare11.com/news/news_article.aspx?storyid=541522&catid=14, <http://www.startribune.com/politics/state/40905067.html?elr=KArksUUUU>.

As you are aware, the disability community has been deeply concerned since learning of the devastating cuts the Governor's budget proposal includes for the disability community. We realize that when facing a budget deficit as dire as the one we currently face in this state, it is simply impossible to avoid cuts to services. However we in the disability community are deeply committed to the philosophy of "nothing about us without us" and to this end we would like to be included in discussions of how to make cuts in a way that is least harmful to the disability community.

The energy and conversation sparked at the rally that has since spread widely throughout Minnesota's disability community is pragmatic and hopeful. It focuses on how we can be part of the solution and is grounded in the hope that our legislators understand Minnesota is not the kind of state to balance a budget by cutting the services that vulnerable individuals rely on. We are eager to meet with you to discuss these ideas or to serve as a resource on any disability issue.

Thank you again for your time and public service,

Steve Larson and Jeff Nachbar, MN-CCD Co-chairs

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