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**Proposed State Funding Cuts Threaten Wisconsin's Most Vulnerable**  
*Cuts Would Impact Jobless Families, People with Disabilities, Children and Seniors*

Families left jobless by the recession, people with disabilities, children, and seniors would be among those hit hardest by proposed budget cuts to state safety-net human service programs, speakers said during a Capitol press conference today.

Governor Jim Doyle's proposed state budget calls for more than \$60 million in reductions from 2009 levels to county human services programs, including funding for programs that help needy families, individuals with mental health problems, and parents under stress. The funding cuts are in addition to the 1 percent across-the-board cuts to virtually all state programs that the Governor proposed in his budget.

"These cuts will have real consequences for our communities," said Fond du Lac County Executive Allen Buechel. Buechel noted that because of the recession, Fond du Lac and other counties are already seeing increasing demand for FoodShare (food stamps), Medicaid, and other services for families in need. Most of these programs are funded by the state and federal government but administered by Wisconsin's counties.

Buechel and other advocates for families, people with disabilities, children, and seniors warned that those harmful effects will only get worse if lawmakers and the governor try to balance the state's \$6.6 billion budget deficit solely by cutting state spending.

"We need to take a balanced approach that includes spending reductions and targeted revenue increases," Buechel said. "We simply cannot cut our way out of this crisis."

Other speakers emphasized how critical human service programs help them with their daily lives.

Tamryn Ring and Jason Montiel said they are struggling to find work in Beloit's tough job market. The couple relies on FoodShare (food stamps) to help make ends meet and Medicaid to get needed medical care for their son, who was recently diagnosed with autism.

Steve Verriden, a spokesman for ADAPT Wisconsin, a group that advocates on behalf of people with physical disabilities, added that the Governor's proposed cuts will have a cascading effect on other human service programs, including those that allow people with disabilities to work in the community and live independently.

"Each budget cycle has consistently gnawed away at the services people with disabilities and the elderly rely on to get by from day to day," he said. "This will only make things worse."

That view was shared by the Rev. Luci Gaylord Hunter, a retired pastor from Milwaukee, who noted that she is able to serve as a leader in her community thanks to "the important supports which depend on public funding - healthcare, transportation, and affordable housing."

Tuesday's press conference was sponsored by more than 60 groups (see attached list), including the Wisconsin Counties Association, the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, the Institute for Wisconsin's Future, the Wisconsin Association of School Boards, ADAPT Wisconsin, Disability Rights Wisconsin, the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups, and the Wisconsin Catholic Conference. A full list of supporting organizations and a statement of principle is attached.

Jim Moeser, deputy director of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, urged Governor Doyle and state lawmakers to take a responsible approach to fixing the state's \$6.6 billion deficit by adopting both spending cuts and targeted revenue increases.

Moeser said the Governor and lawmakers had already taken important steps recently in closing tax loopholes and making the tax system more efficient, such as by collecting state sales taxes on Internet sales. He also praised the Joint Finance Committee's bipartisan vote last week to hire more state auditors to collect unpaid Wisconsin sales and income taxes.

"We need solutions and leadership that will protect our communities and Wisconsin's most vulnerable citizens as we work together during these difficult times," he said.