



VIOLENCE FREE
MINNESOTA
THE COALITION TO END RELATIONSHIP ABUSE

State Legislative Update

(April 24, 2020)

The focus at the legislature remains on COVID-19 responses, and it's clear that anything that is not COVID related will not be heard or moved unless it has bipartisan support in both chambers. The state has appropriated \$550 million in state funds in response to COVID so far. Lawmakers set aside \$200 million of that for a COVID-19 Minnesota Fund. That law created a 10-member commission of lawmakers - with equal members from both chambers and both parties — who must be consulted on COVID-19 expenses of \$1 million or more, and could veto expenditure requests made by the MMB. This has not happened thus far.

A report by the Minnesota House Fiscal Analysis Department that was presented to the House's Ways and Means Committee last week estimates that Minnesota could receive up to \$3.775 billion, mostly but not exclusively from the CARES Act. Most of the funds are still awaiting guidance as to how and when they will be distributed.

Republicans and Democrats are divided on several issues, including more legislative involvement in spending decisions for COVID-19 Fund, voting by mail, and the amount of money that should go to rental assistance.

HF4556

[HF4556](#) is the fourth piece of legislation passed by the MN state legislature to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Passed on April 14th, it contains many provisions discussed in remote committee meetings. The bill includes:

- [HF798 \(as amended\)](#) – Child support payment rates
 - Extends the deadline a child support payer has to file a motion to contest a cost-of-living increase to June 30, 2020
 - A court would also be permitted to use its discretion if someone cannot file by that date due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but files by Oct. 31, 2020.
 - Background:
 - By [statute](#), court-ordered child support is subject to a COLA increase every two years based on the Consumer Price Index. This year's increase is 4.7%, effective May 1. This year's change notices have been sent to payees, who typically have until the increase's effective date to file a motion to contest the increase.
 - The bill specifies that any cost-of-living adjustment would be effective May 1, 2020, unless the court chooses an alternate date.



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- [HF1197 \(as amended\)](#) – Court deadlines
 - Suspends the ruling of statutory deadlines that govern district and appellate court proceedings
 - Applies to deadlines that had not expired as of March 13, 2020 or begun on or after that date, and the suspension would last until 60 days after the peacetime emergency ends
 - Background:
 - There are different statutory limitation periods on a variety of cases, and some of those may be approaching the deadline to be filed in court. Recent judicial orders in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic have stopped new trials from starting and encouraged remote hearings in others, which has led to delays.
- Filing to wed -
 - Allows local registrars accept electronic filings, mailed or faxed marriage applications during a peacetime emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Also allows examination of the parties under oath using audio or video
 - Background:
 - [Current statute](#) requires at least one of the parties appear in person when submitting the application
 - This change would expire when the peacetime emergency ends, but no later than Jan. 15, 2021.

Other Policy Changes Included in bill:

- Extends emergency powers to Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm to open temporary health facilities at places such as school gyms or armories.
 - The facilities would be enrolled as Medical Assistance providers.
 - Strengthens the Department of Health's temporary emergency authority, allowing it to delay, waive, modify, or issue variances to some state laws, and providing related reporting requirements.
- Allows the state use federal transportation funds to pay for protective gear like masks, gloves and plastic barriers to protect transit workers.
- Expands coverage of telemedicine during the pandemic and provides medical assistance to uninsured Minnesotans for COVID-19 testing and treatment.
 - Requires health carriers to provide coverage for those services and prohibit them from denying coverage based on the mechanism or platform used to deliver services.



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- The bill would also make supervised mental health practitioners and respiratory therapists eligible to provide telemedicine services and expand the definition of “telemedicine services” to include phone conversations, which would likely be more comfortable for older, less tech-savvy patients.
- Clarifies that Medical Assistance is available for uninsured individuals for the testing and diagnosis of COVID-19.
- Provide Medical Assistance coverage for diagnostic products used for identifying COVID-19.
- Extends out-of-state commercial driver’s licenses for new Minnesota residents.
- Allows the Department of Public Safety to issue commercial driver’s licenses without immediately administering eye exams and taking in-person photographs.
- Requires reports from the Metropolitan Council and Department of Transportation about use of any temporary powers during the emergency.
- Temporarily allows nonconforming wills to be probated if execution defects are shown to be harmless by clear and convincing evidence.
- Delays the enforcement of certain debts secured by agricultural property, such as foreclosing a mortgage, by extending the mediation period under the Farmer-Lender Mediation Act.
- Adds an additional \$1.25 million to a fiscal year 2020 appropriation to reimburse Second Harvest Heartland for the purchase of milk and protein products, including meat, dry legumes, cheese, and eggs.

The state legislature also passed an Emergency Insulin Bill. You can learn more about that bill [here](#).