



1 February 20223

Chair Fateh and Senate Higher Education Finance and Policy Committee Members,

Please accept this letter of support for the SF655, Inclusive Higher Education Act, as an affirmation of our full support and encouragement for this work in Minnesota. The proposed legislation provides the much-needed framework and funding for increasing access to postsecondary education for youth and young adults with intellectual disabilities.

Inclusive Networking, supports job seekers with disabilities to find integrated, competitive employment through Customized Employment services and helps businesses in diversifying their workforce to include more employees with disabilities. As a former Special Education teacher and current Customized Employment Specialist, I know firsthand the importance of young adults with intellectual disabilities having an opportunity to pursue postsecondary education and earning meaningful credentials for personal and professional development. With this Act, students will have more access, experience, and qualifications for the careers they wish to pursue. With many students leaving transition programs without a job or attending college, this Act will provide an opportunity for students to discover their interests, skills, and work conditions toward a meaningful career.

We know that the investment in inclusive higher education translates into higher levels of employment, wages, and independent living and less reliance on social services like Social Security and Vocational Rehabilitation for people with intellectual disabilities. If passed, this expansion will be a great benefit to Minnesotans with intellectual disabilities since less than 3% have access to Minnesota postsecondary education offerings today.

Upon passage of the SF655 Inclusive Higher Education Act, Inclusive Networking looks forward to being a resource to the Institute on Community Integration to increase access and expand the postsecondary education opportunities that will widen the pathway for young adults with intellectual disabilities to earn higher education credentials, pursue a career of their choice, earn a competitive wage, and live in homes of their choice.

Sincerely,

Nicole Rabinowitz

Founder