



RE: **SF 655 Inclusive Higher Education**
ATTN: Minnesota Senate Higher Education Committee
Date: February 2, 2023

Honorable Chair Fateh and Members of the Committee,

The Minnesota Council on Disability urges the committee to support SF 655 which would establish the Inclusive Higher Education Technical Assistance Center and inclusive higher education grant program. This bill will help expand access to higher education opportunities for Minnesotans with intellectual disabilities.

The Minnesota Council on Disability supports any effort or legislation that expands access and inclusion for Minnesotans with disabilities. College is a dream for many Minnesotans and Minnesotans with intellectual disabilities are no exception. Inclusive higher education provides positive outcomes for people with intellectual disabilities—higher levels of employment, wages and independent living as well as less reliance on social services like Social Security and Vocational Rehabilitation. Currently, less than three percent of Minnesotans with intellectual disabilities have access to postsecondary education offerings in Minnesota. This legislation will benefit many Minnesotans with intellectual disabilities who will be able to access more higher education options, and ones that are inclusive. This further supports the idea of independence and living in the community of one's choice, guaranteed by the Olmstead Decision.

This bill not only provides more higher education options for Minnesotans with intellectual disabilities, but also makes our higher education institutions more inclusive and accessible places of learning. Expanding inclusive higher education is an essential part of building an inclusive Minnesota for people with intellectual disabilities. It will strengthen Minnesota's economy and workforce because people with intellectual disabilities who complete postsecondary education are more likely to be employed, earn a competitive wage, and live in homes of their choice in their communities. Building a society where people with disabilities belong means expanding access to places and opportunities that have not always been accessible, including Minnesota's higher education system. Please support SF 655 and support the dream of many Minnesotans with intellectual disabilities to pursue higher education opportunities.

Sincerely,

Trevor Turner
Public Policy Director
Minnesota Council on Disability