



February 2, 2023

Dear Chair Fateh and Members of the Higher Education Committee,

The Minnesota Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (MNCCD) would like to express our support of SF 655. MNCCD is a broad-based coalition of advocacy and provider organizations and individuals working to change public policy to improve the lives of people with disabilities through building awareness, providing education, and engaging in the community. We are very supportive of SF 655, which would expand access to inclusive higher education statewide, and we are grateful to Chair Fateh for authoring this important legislation.

One of MNCCD's policy principles is individual empowerment and choice, along with promoting an accessible, safe, and inclusive society. We must support choice for people with disabilities in all aspects of their lives—including higher education. Currently only three percent of young adults with intellectual disabilities have access to postsecondary options in Minnesota; SF 655 expands access so that more people with intellectual disabilities have an opportunity and a choice to pursue postsecondary education. This legislation addresses the considerable gap by providing technical assistance and grant funding to institutions of higher education.

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.

We urge the committee to support SF 655.

Sincerely,

Julia Page
Public Policy Co-Chair

Trevor Turner
Public Policy Co-Chair