

Testimony of Jose Peacock and Kate Seng

Chair Fateh and Committee members:

Our names are Jose Peacock and Kate Seng. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SF 655.

Jose Peacock

I am 22 years old. I like to fish, I am very interested in jazz music, and I enjoy classic cars. I am on the Autism spectrum and learn differently than other people. Some things take me a little longer to learn, and I learn best through hands-on experiences.

I want to continue my education and go to college. I completed a high school transition program called Focus Beyond Transitions through St. Paul Public schools in May of 2022. I learned to ride the city bus, I met friends, and I completed many internships that have helped me learn new skills. I am very interested in getting a job in the green collar industry. Positions in this field include working as a plant health care technician, farm manager, forestry technician, or an Arborist Tree climber. I would also like to live independently from my parents. I will need to earn a postsecondary education credential and need some additional support to achieve these goals. I have been admitted to the University of Iowa REACH program where I can continue my education, live on campus, explore my work interests, and gain work experience, skills and knowledge. I would like to attend college in Minnesota, but there are no Minnesota 4-year inclusive postsecondary education options that currently exist.

Kate Seng

I am Jose's mom. Jose is an amazing young man who is always learning and sharing new ideas with me and our extended family and friends. Jose's time at Focus Beyond Transitions provided important learning opportunities for Jose to become more independent and confident. And now we are supporting Jose's search for an inclusive higher education offering that provides Jose access to academic learning, connecting with peers, enhancing his independence, and gaining skills and knowledge to support his desire to work in the green industry. Jose would benefit tremendously from an inclusive post-secondary education option that includes academic classes, on campus

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housing and becoming a part of the campus community to continue his growth and development and transition to adulthood. And as our economy continues to recover and reset from the pandemic and other factors that are causing a labor shortage – our state would benefit immensely from an investment in college access for individuals with intellectual and other disabilities.

Jose and Kate

We ask that you support SF 655 so that there are high-quality inclusive post-secondary education options in Minnesota.