

S.F. No. 655 – Establishes the Inclusive Higher Education Technical Assistance Center and related grant program

Author: Senator Omar Fateh

Prepared by: Joan White, Senate Counsel (651/296-3814)

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Section 1 (135A.161) Inclusive Higher Education Technical Assistance Center

Subd 1 defines terms for this section and section 2.

Subd 2 requires the commissioner to contract with the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota to establish the Inclusive Higher Education Technical Assistance Center. The purpose of the center is to increase access to postsecondary education for students with an intellectual disability to earn degrees or certificates leading to employment and independent living.

Subd 3 requires the center to name a director and appoint an advisory committee.

Subd 4 sets out the responsibilities of the center, which include: advising institutions on federal requirements and accreditation standards, monitoring relevant federal and state law, providing technical assistance to institutions of higher education, and disseminating information listed in this section to students and their parents.

Section 2 (135A.162) Inclusive Higher Education Grants

Subd 1 requires the commissioner of the Office of Higher Education, in collaboration with the director of the center under section 1, to establish a competitive grant program for Minnesota higher education institutions to develop new or enhance existing initiatives to enroll and increase the enrollment of students with an intellectual disability.

Subd 2 specifies the criteria for eligible grantees.

Subd 3 specifies grant application procedures. The application must include a written plan that addresses the requirements listed in this section.

Subd 4 establishes an account in the special revenue fund for the grant program. The funds do not cancel, and the commissioner may use up to 5% of that amount deposited in the account for administrative expenses.

Subd 5 requires the commissioner to award grants on a competitive basis using the criteria established in collaboration with the center. Provides that an eligible institution may receive up to \$200,000 per year for four years and \$100,000 in subsequent years pending performance and funding limitations. Lists grantee requirements, which include a 25% match, either in-kind or monetary.

Subd 6 requires grantees to submit reports to the director with information listed in this section.

Subd 7 requires the director to evaluate the grantee initiatives and submit an annual report to the legislative committees with jurisdiction over higher education issues.

This section is effective July 1, 2023, except the report under subd 7 is effective July 1, 2024.

Section 3 states that this act may be cited as the “Minnesota Inclusive Higher Education Act.”

Section 4 appropriates \$250,000 per year ongoing for the center under section 1 and \$750,000 ongoing for the grant program in section 2.