

Chair Fateh and Members of the Higher Education Committee,

I am reaching out to express my support for Minnesota Independence College & Community (MICC) and ask you to please support this incredible school and Senate File 2084.

I serve on the Board of this wonderful school that works exclusively with young adults and their families impacted by autism and learning differences to support their post-high school growth into adult lives of independence and joy. I joined the board as a retired registered nurse who had a passion to continue to impact the health of our community, and especially because my partner has a 27-year-old adult daughter on the spectrum. I had no experience or knowledge of how best to support her. Bill and I met a few years ago, and I was introduced to his daughter, Brooke. My own children are not affected by learning differences, and I'd never had a close relationship with anyone who was. It was important to me that I educated myself as my relationship with her father grew. I've personally worked with the students at MICC and so has Bill. We are both so very disappointed that we didn't know about MICC before Brooke had aged out of eligibility for their college program. Now that we know, we are sharing what we know about MICC with everyone we can so that others can take advantage of this little-known option, right in our own community, to help their children and families.

Time and time again, we are met with, "I had no idea this school even existed." Please help us help more of these young people and their families by supporting Senate File 2084. There are so few options, and MICC's results speak for themselves, but it is so much more than just numbers and statistics. These are people's lives that can take a completely different trajectory because of the education and support MICC provides. As a Board member, I also see great progress in MICC's leadership and staff toward strong and fully committed policies and practices around inclusion and diversity. I serve, as they do, with pride in our students and humility in our efforts.

Please be a voice for students that need a different path to success.

If you have questions about MICC or would like to schedule a visit, please contact Kaley Taffe at 651-503-1820 or kaley@katconsultingllc.com. We would love to see you on campus!

Thank you,

Jan Wuorenma, RN, BSN, MBA

Chair Fateh & Members,

Thank you for your work at the legislature - especially as the chair of the Higher Education Committee.

I am reaching out to express my support for Minnesota Independence College & Community (MICC) and ask you to please support this incredible school and Senate File 2084.

My son, Thomas, has graduated from the college program and is currently receiving services from the community program. My husband and I had resolved that he would either live with us or in a group home, prior to finding this program. He is now living independently with a roommate and working as a dishwasher at Panera Bread in Richfield. He has been at Panera for over 3-years and takes a lot of pride in his job. We never thought this would be possible!

The services that he receives from MICC allow him to live independently and provide social activities and experiences that he personally would have difficulty organizing. We feel fortunate every day for finding MICC. It is important that other families are able to access these services.

MICC's results speak for themselves, but it is more than just statistics. These are people's lives that are able to take a completely different trajectory because of the education and support MICC provides.

Please be a voice for students that need a different path to success.

If you have questions about MICC or would like to schedule a visit, please contact Kaley Taffe at 651-503-1820 or kaley@katconsultinglic.com.

Sincerely,

Joye Bedard

Senator Fateh and Members,

I am reaching out to express my support for Minnesota Independence College & Community (MICC) and ask you to please support this incredible school and Senate File 2084.

I am a parent of William, a second-year participant at MICC. We are so grateful to be part of this program as it is exactly what William needs to get him launched on his dream of an independent life. He is living apart from us, learning how to take care of himself and planning for a future career in health care services, a long-time goal.

Though we supported him when he was at home in these efforts, we lacked the training and skills that professionals like those at MICC can offer. And, more importantly, we lacked the access to a community of peers, mentors, and staff that can help him reach his goal of a productive, independent life.

MICC's results speak for themselves, but it is more than just statistics. These are people's lives that are able to take a completely different trajectory because of the education and support MICC provides. This program enables neurodiverse individuals to work for what we all want: a meaningful and full existence.

Please be a voice for students that need a different path to success.

With continued appreciation for your service to the state of Minnesota.

Laura Nisi

612.834.4034

Hopkins, Minnesota

Chair Fateh and Higher Ed Committee Members,

We are reaching out to express our support for Minnesota Independence College & Community (MICC) and ask you to please support this incredible school and Senate File 2084.

Our son, Andrew, enrolled in MICC in 2015 and found a level of independence we could not have imagined for him. He was successful and engaged during his three years as an undergraduate. Andrew found part-time employment during his senior year. After graduation, he continued as a member of the MICC Community Program. He recently celebrated a five-year anniversary at his work. Andrew manages his everyday life beautifully. He shares a house and does meal planning, grocery shopping, laundry, and common household chores independently. He plans for and enjoys long bicycle rides in the summer, exploring the far corners of the metro area.

All this independence was beyond our imagination when he was in high school. It was clear, with his social communication disorder, significant learning differences in math and executive functioning and his ADHD, an academic path was not appropriate for Andrew. It is a frightening and lonely time as a parent, not knowing if there is a place for your child in the adult world. Where do we turn when we know he would not thrive continuing to live at home? We found MICC! MICC has been a true life saver for our son and our family. He embraced the hands-on, real-life learning. He felt pride in his accomplishments - something he did not often experience in school up to that point. He flourished and continues to grow in his skill and knowledge of living on his own. We are so happy for Andrew and proud of all that he has accomplished.

MICC's results speak for themselves, but it is more than just statistics. These are people's lives that are able to take a completely different trajectory because of the education and support MICC provides.

Please be a voice for students that need a different path to success.

Lisa K. Keitel and Eric A. Sjostrom

Parents of Andrew K. Sjostrom MICC Community Member

Chair Fateh & Committee Members,

Thank you for your work at the legislature- especially as the chair of the Higher Education Committee.

I am expressing my support for Minnesota Independence College & Community (MICC) and asking you to support this incredible school and Senate File 2084.

As the Director of the life-long MICC Community Program, I have personally observed with the nearly 100 families that have chosen to make South Minneapolis and Richfield their permanent home that autism is a complex and heterogeneous condition that affects individuals and their families differently. This makes it challenging to develop comprehensive support systems that meet the unique needs of each individual. This is precisely what we do at MICC and is a demonstrated model of success.

The transition from high school to post-secondary life requires a coordinated effort among various agencies, including education, healthcare, social services, and vocational rehabilitation. Unfortunately, the current system often lacks coordination and communication among these agencies, leading to fragmentation and gaps in services. The limited funding for autism services and the high demand for these services make it difficult to provide the necessary support and resources to all individuals with autism, especially after they leave high school. Your continued support for funding toward this effort is incredibly impactful at MICC and greatly appreciated by myself and our entire community.

MICC's results speak for themselves, but it is more than just statistics. These people's lives and their entire families can take a completely different trajectory because of the education and support MICC provides.

Warm regards,

Staff: Jena Kulenkamp

Chair Fateh and Senators,

I am reaching out to express my support for Minnesota Independence College & Community (MICC) and ask you to please support this incredible school and Senate File 2084.

My name is Jena Kulenkamp and I am the Transition and Resource Manager at MICC. In my unique role as a member of the Financial Services Office, I work with participants and families to provide resources in the areas of county/state benefits and services, and family education. I am committed to using person centered approaches and love working with MICC participants and families. Prior to joining MICC in 2019, I had a background as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and as a CADI Case Manager. Through these experiences, I have gained knowledge and understanding of numerous resources which I love sharing with MICC participants and families that I work with.

I have personally seen the impact that MICC has on participants and families we serve. I have the pleasure of working across programs and help participants transition in and out of the different programs that MICC offers as well as getting connected to state/county/federal benefits in which they are eligible. One of my favorite parts of my job is when a participant or one of their family members shares how grateful they are they found MICC and how they love being part of such an amazing community. In my observation, there are not many programs like MICC and there is a lack of education of options out there for young adults as they transition out of high school.

MICC's results speak for themselves, but it is more than just statistics. These are people's lives that are able to take a completely different trajectory because of the education and support MICC provides.

Best,

Jena Kulen

Chair Fateh and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for your work at the legislature- especially as the chair of the Higher Education Committee. I am reaching out to express my support for Minnesota Independence College & Community (MICC) and ask you to please support our school and Senate File 2084.

I have been an educator in Minnesota since 1995, predominantly working with participants on the autism spectrum.

My dedication to the autism community is what brought me to MICC. My position at MICC has made me aware of the urgent need for funding to help mitigate the financial burden on families to fund our unique program.

The programs at MICC provide participants on the autism spectrum, or other learning difficulties, the opportunity to experience a supportive community of learners, a place where they belong.

The outcomes of people on the autism spectrum without a community like MICC, are less than favorable. As a staff member, I feel honored to be a part of such a vibrant community of learners.

MICC affords participants a place to feel supported, a place where their voices are heard, and a place to live independent productive lives; fully employed, able to make long lasting friendships and give back to the community.

One more unique feature of the programming at MICC is the ability of our participants to continue receiving a robust amount of support post-graduation, resulting in a lifetime support system.

If you have questions about MICC or would like to schedule a visit, please contact Kaley Taffe at 651-503-1820 or kaley@katconsultingllc.com

Sincerely,

Catherine MacLaughlin

Chair Fateh & Senators,

I am expressing my support for Minnesota Independence College & Community (MICC) and asking you to support this incredible school and Senate File 2084.

As the Director of Advancement at MICC, I have the privilege to meet with and get to know the families impacted by MICC. Over the last five years, I've witnessed the profound impact the investment from the state has had on MICC. We are serving 40% more participants; financial accessibility is no longer a barrier and families of all socioeconomic levels are able to access our programming. Additionally, demand is beyond our current capacity with a waitlist for the college program last year and projected for next year's entering class.

The transition from high school to post-secondary life requires a coordinated effort among various agencies, including education, healthcare, social services, and vocational rehabilitation. Unfortunately, the current system often lacks coordination and communication among these agencies, leading to fragmentation and gaps in services. The limited funding for autism services and the high demand for these services make it difficult to provide the necessary support and resources to all individuals with autism, especially after they leave high school. Your continued support for funding toward this effort is incredibly impactful at MICC and greatly appreciated by our entire community.

MICC's results speak for themselves but are more than just statistics. These people's lives and their entire families can take a different trajectory because of the education and support that MICC provides.

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Sincerely,

Ben Lentz