

March 3, 2023

Re: Support for SF 1261

To: State & Local Government and & Veterans Committee Members



Dear Chair Champion and Committee Members,

The Arc Minnesota supports SF 1261, a bill regarding the employment and retention of employees with disabilities in our state government workforce. People with disabilities often face difficult or even insurmountable barriers in both finding and maintaining employment.

The state does not have adequate disability representation in its workforce. Many people with disabilities do not work full time or have a job at all. Minnesota has a high percentage of people with disabilities who are unemployed¹. This includes many people who want to work and build careers. Disparities in employment are compounded for Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) with disabilities.²

Far too often, policies that impact Minnesotans with disabilities are being decided by a small group of non-disabled decision makers. People with disabilities must be centered in systems and social change—including employment policy—because they have power, know what is best for themselves, and know what is needed to enhance opportunity and quality of life.

Minnesotans with disabilities need a seat at the state governing table. This is a “*Nothing About Us Without Us*” bill which would require more consultation with people with disabilities and those who are disability employment experts. Increasing disability employment and retention among the state government workforce creates a pathway for future leaders and policy makers in our state enterprise system. When Minnesotans with disabilities are making the decisions in our cabinet agencies, the disability community in our state will be better off.

The Arc Minnesota supports public policies like SF 1261 which are founded in the principles of human civil rights, self-advocacy & self-direction, equity & true belonging, and disability & racial justice. We ask members of this committee to support the passage of this bill so our state can be a model employer for people with disabilities, state employees with disabilities have the support to serve the state of Minnesota, and opportunities to lead our state agencies.

Thank you, Sen. Maye Quade, for bringing this bill forward. The Arc Minnesota encourages the committee to pass SF 1261.

Sincerely,

Julia Page
Public Policy Director

¹ https://mn.gov/admin/assets/minnesotans-with-disabilities-popnotes-march2017_tcm36-283045_tcm36-283045.pdf

² <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/article/2020/people-of-color-face-systemic-disparities-in-minnesotas-labor-market>