

April 4, 2024

Re: SF 5244

Dear Chair Dziedzic and Members of the Committee:

The Minnesota Elder Justice Center, The Arc Minnesota, Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, and the Center for Excellence in Supported Decision Making write in support of SF 5244, to create a Task Force examining guardianship, but prioritizing Supported Decision-Making as a best practice alternative to guardianship.

For too long, people with IDD, older adults, and individuals with mental health support needs have been subjected to restrictive guardianships that strip them of their civil rights and decision-making authority. We believe all people have the right to make decisions, have control in their lives, advocate for themselves, and get support from trusted allies as they make decisions. That's why we promote less restrictive alternatives to guardianship – such as Supported Decision Making – when working with people to navigate the aging and disability service system.

The Task Force as written in SF 5244 will necessarily provide ample focus on Supported Decision-Making. **Supported Decision-Making is a best practice in helping individuals with disabilities, older adults, and others with cognitive limitations make informed choices.** It respects the autonomy of older adults, individual living with disabilities, and those with cognitive impairment, while intentionally supporting them to build their confidence and competence in decision-making. While guardianship is appropriate in some instances, it should be the very last alternative considered as it can greatly restrict a person's ability to make decisions about where to live, their healthcare, or even if they can vote.

SF 5244 will allow for necessary conversations around guardianship practices, and continue to advance Supported-Decision Making in Minnesota.

Gratefully,

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