

**March 14, 2024**

**Re: The Arc Minnesota Letter of Support, SF 4525**

Chair Fateh and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee,

On behalf of The Arc Minnesota, we write today in support of Senate File 4525, known as the Minnesota Respond, Innovate, Succeed, and Empower (RISE) Act.

The Arc Minnesota is a statewide nonprofit organization that works to promote and protect the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), supporting them and their families in a lifetime of full inclusion and participation in their communities.

A key element of full inclusion and participation in community for young adults with intellectual disabilities is access to higher education opportunities. Students with intellectual disabilities who attend postsecondary education are more than twice as likely to be employed, live in homes of their own, and rely less on government programs like Supplemental Security Income and Vocational Rehabilitation. This strengthens the Minnesota workforce, reduces dependence on more formal, costly supports, and leads to long-term cost savings for the state. More importantly, it will ensure young adults with intellectual disabilities can pursue their dreams, live the life of their choice, and find belonging in their communities.

Unfortunately, though, Minnesota lagged behind some other states in the country in making higher education available for and accessible to young adults with intellectual disabilities. Last year, the state's enrollment capacity for students with intellectual disabilities was just 90-100, compared to the approximately 5000 prospective students who might be interested in pursuing higher education if they had access to do so. This demonstrated the need and the opportunity for Minnesota to join other states that have been leading on inclusive higher education in our country.

That's why we were so passionate about advocating alongside parent advocates like Mary Hauff and many others during the 2023 session, during which the legislature passed a monumental bill investing in inclusive post-secondary education that would make the dream of going to college a reality for students with intellectual disabilities throughout the state.

The commitment made by the Minnesota legislature last session was historic in establishing vital infrastructure to make inclusive higher education possible. Now, with the RISE Act, we have an opportunity to protect and expand that access.

By establishing proactive, interactive processes for determining students' reasonable accommodation needs, sharing plain language information about the range of accommodations available, allowing students to withdraw from classes if accommodations cannot be made, and more, the RISE Act will make Minnesota's post-secondary education institutions more welcoming, accessible, and inclusive of thousands of young adults with disabilities who have bright futures ahead. **Please support the RISE Act and prioritize inclusion in the higher education omnibus bill.**

Respectfully,

Tina Rucci, Public Policy Director

The Arc Minnesota