



March 12, 2024

The Honorable Omar Fateh  
Chair, Higher Education Committee  
Minnesota Senate  
3219 Minnesota Senate Bldg.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Zach Duckworth  
Ranking Minority Member, Higher Education Committee  
Minnesota Senate  
2229 Minnesota Senate Bldg.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**Re: Legal Aid letter of support for SF 4525**

Dear Chair Fateh, Ranking Minority Member Duckworth, and Members of the Committee:

The Legal Services Advocacy Project (LSAP) and the Minnesota Disability Law Center (MDLC) write in support of SF 4525, the Minnesota Respond, Innovate, Succeed, and Empower (RISE) Act. The RISE Act will help Minnesota colleges and universities comply with the legal requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Minnesota Human Rights Act to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are often necessary to afford students with disabilities meaningful access to the educational services offered by colleges and universities, and the RISE Act establishes policies, procedures, and processes that will ensure that these reasonable accommodations are provided.

Making clear that certain documents are sufficient to establish that a student is a person with a disability will create consistency across colleges and universities and simplify the process for both students and schools. Requiring one office to be responsible for disseminating student accommodation plans would save students and instructors time as well as not require students to go over their personal (and sometimes sensitive) information multiple times per quarter or semester. This would save both students and instructors time as well.

Legal Aid Letter re: SF 4525

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Speaking as a parent of a former University of Minnesota student with accommodations, I (Ellen Smart) can attest that my daughter's experiences with the U of M's Disability Resource Center were very helpful. However, my daughter had an instructor who told her she was not allowed to use the accommodations she had approved through the Center in her class. Having the plans come directly from the Center would lend credibility to the plans and require instructors to follow them or document the reasons why they will not, which will likely act as a deterrent to refusing accommodations.

It is important to note that this statute will not violate student privacy as each student will need to give permission for their information to be shared with their instructors. Moreover, the RISE Act will work in tandem with existing anti-discrimination laws to help create an environment where students with disabilities can succeed in higher education. To clarify how these laws would work together, LSAP and MDLC recommend adding language that states that the RISE Act does not limit any of the rights or remedies that are available under the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Minnesota Human Rights Act.

Thank you for allowing us to submit input on SF 4525.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Purrington  
Legal Director/Deputy Director  
Minnesota Disability Law Center



Ellen Smart  
Staff Attorney  
Legal Services Advocacy Project

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