



COUNCIL ON DISABILITY

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Honorable Chair Senator Ron Latz
Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee
SF 5097 – Parent Rights for Minnesotans with Disabilities
April 3rd, 2024

Chair Latz and members of the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety committee,

The Minnesota Council on Disability strongly supports SF 5097, a bill that aims to fortify the rights of parents with disabilities in Minnesota. This legislation addresses an often overlooked issue: the unfair treatment and discrimination against disabled parents in custody, parenting time, and adoption cases.

Minnesotans with disabilities have a fundamental right to be parents. Despite proven capabilities and the existence of supportive technologies and services, parents with disabilities frequently face bias in legal proceedings. These biases not only undermine their rights but also harm the well-being of their children by potentially separating them from loving, capable parents based on unfounded prejudices.

The current statutes inadequately protect these rights, as evidenced by numerous cases where parents with disabilities are judged more harshly than their non-disabled counterparts. This is not just an issue of legal fairness; it's a matter of human rights. SF 5097 seeks to address these injustices by establishing clear, fair procedures that assess a parent's fitness based on actual behaviors and capabilities, not mere assumptions about their disabilities.

SF 5097 proposes essential changes that would ensure disabled parents are treated equally under the law. It demands that challenges to parental rights must be based on concrete evidence of behavior that could endanger a child, not on the presence of a disability. This bill emphasizes the importance of supportive parenting services as a first step in addressing concerns, thereby upholding the right of people with disabilities to be parents and ensuring their children have the opportunity to grow up in loving, supportive homes.

By supporting SF 5097, you are not just advocating for a change in law but for the protection of fundamental rights. This legislation will ensure that parents with disabilities are afforded the same rights and judged by the same standards as non-disabled parents. It is a critical move towards fairness, equality, and the best interests of children.

The Minnesota council on disabilities urges the committee to support to SF 5097 and ensure that it becomes law. By doing so, you will help protect the rights of disabled parents in Minnesota, affirming their right to be parents and ensuring that families can remain together and thrive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Trevor Turner'.

Trevor Turner
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David Dively'.

David Dively
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