



March 27, 2025

Senate Human Services Committee

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for SF3040 - Swimming Lessons

Dear Chair Hoffman and Human Services Committee Members,

The Multicultural Autism Action Network is a non-profit organization serving families of children with disabilities in multicultural communities. We are writing to express strong support of SF3040, which ensures that people receiving HCBS can use budgeted funds to cover the cost of swimming lessons for individuals with disabilities at a higher risk of drowning.

A 2017 study by the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University put the risk of drowning for autistic children at 160 times higher than non-autistic children ¹. Until 2023, families were generally allowed to use their CDCS or CSG budgets to cover the cost of swimming lessons if they chose. Within the past two years, we began hearing that these budgets could only be used to cover the difference between adapted swimming lessons and swimming lessons for children without disabilities, which put that expense out of reach for many families. In other instances their requests for coverage were outright denied. The reason usually given was that swimming was considered recreational, and therefore not coverable.

Please make no mistake, teaching an autistic child the basics of water safety is far more than just recreation. Basic water safety is an essential piece of the layers of protection needed to help keep our children safe.

To be clear, this proposal is not asking for any new funds. It simply asks that families who are already receiving Home and Community Based Services be able to allocate some of their budgets to something that they prioritize. That is what a person-centered approach is about. That is what a consumer-directed approach is all about.

Minnesota is proudly the land of 10,000 lakes, but it is also the land of thousands of water hazards, including lakes, streams, rivers, holding ponds, and drainage ditches. For families of children with disabilities, every one of those creates a potential nightmare situation. We should do everything in our power to prevent another drowning death of an autistic child. This bill is one necessary part of building up those layers of protection, and therefore we respectfully ask for your support of this common sense bill.

Thank you,
Multicultural Autism Action Network

¹<https://www.publichealth.columbia.edu/news/individuals-autism-substantially-heightened-risk-injury-death>