



Supporting a full array of disability services options

Greetings Senator McEwen and members of the committee,

My name is Sue Hankner, representing A- Team MN, Inc which was founded in 2021 by families with a member having an IQ of less than 70 and with needed medical, behavioral, and communication assistance and in many cases 24/7 supervision. Our family members have substantial intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) as defined in the current version of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, the American Psychiatric Association Statistical Manual, CDC, the National Institute of Health and MN state statutes and rules.

A-Team MN does not have funds to pay for lobbying. We are all unpaid volunteers creating awareness and advocating for our loved ones. I apologize for not having been able to have a conversation with you before now.

I have two sons aged 51 and 46 with I/DD. They live in Ramsey County near where they grew up. I live in northern St. Louis County. I have been their lifelong teacher and advocate since birth. I have contributed my knowledge, expertise and personal experiences in developmental psychology and psychology of learning in development of education programs for people with I/DD.

Families have many years of lived experiences with their I/DD family members. They are the most experienced and informed to speak on behalf of their loved ones who cannot speak for themselves.

A-Team MN supports a full array of disability services options from which to choose. Disability services are determined by where they live. There are not equal opportunities across the state for housing, transportation, work options, and life enrichment for people with I/DD. With no 14c provider in Duluth and no regularly scheduled day programs, families look to providers in Floodwood and Eveleth for work options and day programs for their I/DD family members.

Disability services, by law, are to be determined based upon person centered planning and informed choice.

SF2149 provision related to 14c, center-based work option provider requirement to pay minimum wage, is a major policy change that has unidentified and unfunded financial commitments. That: presents a risk of elimination of an existing work option of choice for those most affected – our family members.

A-Team MN families oppose this proposed policy because it has no appropriate replacement that meets the developmental needs of people with an IQ less than 70 and their person-centered plans.

My hope is that those advocate organizations proposing this policy change with their strong support are willing to identify a funding source and offer up some of their own government funds to pay this minimum wage mandate.

Nonprofit work option providers have limited funds available to them. Many work options providers produce in-house products they sell in their communities. Because it may take a 14c worker 20 hours to produce a bird house that takes a nondisabled person 2 hours to produce the production cost exceeds what the market is willing to pay. The result is a financial loss.

A-Team MN is offering a plan via SF683 that is an opportunity to conduct comprehensive short term and long term planning of disability services including work options for people with I/DD driven by data and expressed needs and wants of people with I/DD and their families. Fact finding and research would be done by those closest to the I/DD constituencies – legislators and counties.

The legislative commission will select two counties to engage in planning the future for people with I/DD, in their county, using data collection and analysis to reengineer disability services from the bottom up. **The commission and counties must seek direct advice and counsel from people with I/DD, their families and legal guardians.** The county data-based systems reform plans are submitted to the commission for consideration and recommendations. These can become useful models to reform statewide systems of disability services for people with I/DD.

SF683 plan is a data-based systems approach to reform disability services for Minnesota I/DD population that currently is in a documented crisis. We believe SF683 is a reasonable approach. It is planning for the future when financial resources are stretched -with projected severe reductions in services for vulnerable adults with I/DD.

Adopting a minimum wage mandate in the absence of quality data and comprehensive planning of disability services adds to the already high cost of and loss of disability services. A-Team MN opposes a minimum wage unfunded mandate to 14c certificate holders.

Thank you for this opportunity to present the perspective of A-Team MN families having a loved one with substantial I/DD.

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