

Audrey A. Kludtke

Athletic Director at Metro Deaf School

Testimony in support of SF0249

Senate Taxes Hearing

Chairs: Senator Ann H. Rest and Senator Bill Weber

Tuesday, January 28, 2024

Chair Rest, Chair Weber, and members of the committee,

My name is Audrey Kludtke. I am Deaf and the Athletic Director at Metro Deaf School. I am here to state my support for SF0249 and to share my personal story.

Growing up, I wanted to become a physical education teacher. After graduating high school, I thought I would finish college with a master's degree in Deaf Education. But my student loan debts piled up because vocational rehabilitation declined to pay for my college student loans due to my parents' incomes.

I graduated with a bachelor's degree with a ton of debt which prevented me from continuing my studies to become a teacher for the deaf. My dream of being a teacher was lost. My life felt like it was falling apart. I ended up moving back with my parents, starting over, and exploring other opportunities to bring my joy back.

For a long time, I worked random jobs to build up my resume, secretly hoping to discover other opportunities to bring my joy back. I couldn't find joy. Then Metro Deaf School opened a door: an opportunity for me to work as a paraprofessional. I was able to bring my joy back.

I want to return to school as a teacher again to chase my dreams. This bill will help me with my student loans to become a successful teacher one day. It will help others chase their dreams to become teachers for our children, who are the future of this nation. Thank you to Senator Johnson Stewart for carrying this bill. I also thank this committee for your time and ask that you support SF0249 to open the door for more aspiring Deaf Education teachers like me.

Audrey Kludtke

St. Paul, MN