



May 10, 2022

To: Higher Education Conference Committee Members

Re: Higher Education Omnibus Bill

Members of the Higher Education Conference Committee:

On behalf of the Minnesota Inclusive Higher Education Consortium (MIHEC), The Arc Minnesota, Minnesota Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (MNCCD), the thousands of prospective students with intellectual disabilities and their families statewide, we thank you for your work this session. We ask that you include the provisions on inclusive higher education from the House Higher Education committee's omnibus bill (Article 2, Sections 4-5) in the final conference committee report. This would broaden access to postsecondary education for students with intellectual disabilities at institutes of higher education throughout the state that are eager to expand enrollment to these students.

As you have heard in your respective Higher Education committees this session, students with intellectual disabilities who attend postsecondary education are more than twice as likely to be employed, live in homes of their own, and rely less on government supports like SSI and Vocational Rehabilitation. Widening the pathway to postsecondary education will ensure Minnesotans with intellectual disabilities have the opportunity to pursue their careers, live the life of their choice and more fully contribute to their communities. This will strengthen the Minnesota workforce, contribute to the Minnesota economy and lead to long-term cost savings for the state.

Minnesota's current inclusive higher education enrollment capacity of 90-100 students compared to the estimated 5,000 prospective college students with intellectual disabilities exposes the gap. The bill addresses the opportunity for Minnesota to join the states that are leading on inclusive higher education nationwide. We are determined to widen the path for students with an intellectual disability to have access to postsecondary education; a gateway to opportunity that has been narrow and impassable for far too long. We encourage the Conference Committee to include the Inclusive Higher Education provisions and join in support of Minnesotans with an intellectual disability making inclusive higher education a priority.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input and we welcome any questions. We are here as a resource to you in the final days of session as you work on negotiations.

Sincerely,

Mary Hauff
Co-Leader, MIHEC

Melissa Haley and Maren Hulden
Public Policy Co-Chairs, MNCCD

Julia Burkstaller
Public Policy Director, The Arc Minnesota