**PLEASE SUPPORT HF1968/SF2004: A STUDY THAT WILL HELP RETAIN STATE EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES, DEFINE WHICH DISABILITIES QUALIFY FOR NONCOMPETITIVE APPOINTMENTS, AND INCREASE ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY BY STRENGTHENING THE STATE’s AFFIRMATIVE ACTION STATUTES**

**What’s the Problem?** There is a workforce shortage in the state.  Minnesota needs a diverse talent pool to meet its workforce needs.  This includes people with disabilities.  We need their knowledge, skills, and abilities; but, we have a problem retaining them in the workforce.

The most recent state 2018 Affirmative Action Plan from Minnesota Management and Budget stated that:

***“The State lost more than half of the employees with disabilities that were hired in 2016 in the following job categories: Office /Administrators (56%), Professionals (55%), Paraprofessionals (54% and Skilled Craft (50%)”***

*“At the current hiring rate, if retention does not improve, an additional 180 employees with disabilities need to be hired every year to maintain the current workforce representation of an individual with disabilities in the cabinet-level agencies.”*

**To solve the problem we need to:**

**Contact a study on the recruitment and retention of state employees** **with disabilities led by agencies with expertise in the employment of people with disabilities:**

* Make recommendations to the legislature on how to recruit and retain staff in consultation with the Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans, the Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, State Services for the Blind, Minnesota Council on Disability, Ombudsman’s Office on Developmental Disability and Mental Health, Office of Accessibility, MNIT,A System of Technology to Achieve Results (STAR) and Minnesota Management and Budget.

**Strengthen affirmative action laws:**

* Add procedures for compliance with 16:E.03 Subd. 9 (the State’s IT accessibility law) to the reporting requirements state agencies have in the plan.  If employees with disabilities do not have accessible equipment, websites, software, and documents, they cannot perform successfully in the workplace.
* Require MMB to consult with Vocational Rehabilitation Services and State Services for the Blind in their review of the plan so they can make recommendations on how to develop strategies to help recruit and retain employees.
* Require that the department justify hires in competitive and noncompetitive employment for all employees, including the trial job program for people with disabilities and report the number of accommodations requested and filled.

**Clarify and eliminate outdated language in 43A.15 Competitive and Qualifying Appointments:**

* Separate the two trial programs for people with disabilities so they can be tracked and separate strategies can be developed for each program.
* Define disabilities included in these programs using the state definition for ‘significant disabilities’.
* Eliminate the language that permits the state to hire people with disabilities in unpaid on-the-job trial positions.

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