



April 1, 2025

The Honorable Ginny Klevorn
Co-Chair, State Government Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
5th Floor, Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Jim Nash
Co-Chair, State Government Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
2nd Floor, Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Legal Aid/Minnesota Disability Law Center Support for HF 501

Dear Co-Chair Klevorn, Co-Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee:

Legal Aid and the Minnesota Disability Law Center (MDLC) thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony and support for HF 501.

For more than 100 years, Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid has provided access to the legal system for Minnesota's most vulnerable citizens. Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid represents clients without charge in civil cases for people in poverty, people 60 years of age and older, and people with disabilities.

People with disabilities are represented through MMLA's Minnesota Disability Law Center (MDLC). MDLC represents Minnesotans with disabilities in cases against abuse and neglect, ensuring integrated access in the community and in housing in the least-restrictive settings, helping students get access to special education, and removing barriers to employment. In addition to representing clients, MDLC is the federally designated Protection and Advocacy Agency, which allows MDLC to monitor and investigate facilities that serve people with disabilities.

The ERA amendment is more important than ever as we see attacks on the rights of people with disabilities on the federal level. MDLC would like to highlight one of these attacks. Currently, seventeen states have filed a lawsuit against the U.S. government (*Texas vs. Becerra*) which seeks to get rid of Section 504, an important federal law. Section 504 says that if a program receives federal funding, then it cannot discriminate against people with disabilities. Section 504 protections include requiring schools to provide accommodations for students with disabilities and ensuring doctors provide interpretation services to deaf and hard of hearing patients. Without Section 504, hospitals and schools could more easily discriminate against people with disabilities. Passing the ERA would protect and strengthen the rights of people with disabilities in Minnesota, regardless of current attacks on the rights of people with disabilities on the federal level.

Other examples:

- ADA guidance for business owners and operators about what they need to do to comply with the ADA has been removed from the U.S. Department of Justice website.
- ADA guidance documents for hotels and lodging facilities, gas stations and retail establishments have been removed from federal websites.
- Attacks on DEI programs could roll back hiring of persons with disabilities.
- There are efforts at the federal level to close the Department of Education, which enforces protections for students with disabilities in school.

These things are happening now. Minnesota cannot wait. The time to act is now.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding HF 501. Please stand up for Minnesotans with disabilities and support this bill.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Purrington
Legal Director/Deputy Director
Minnesota Disability Law Center



Ellen Smart
Staff Attorney
Legal Services Advocacy Project

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