

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am the parent or caregiver of a child with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

I strongly support efforts to make it possible for all children to play in an environment where they are not limited by physical or cognitive ability. Our goal should be to bring together children of all abilities to engage each other in play and exploration, to develop gross motor skills, build social skills, and to provide an environment of tolerance, diversity, and acceptance.

The concept of inclusive playgrounds shouldn't be innovative, playgrounds inherently should be available to every child, but unfortunately they are not. Many smaller communities cannot afford to provide inclusive play opportunities within their City or Park Board budgets, and sadly, the needs of disabled children and adults are overlooked beyond basic federally mandated accommodations. Efforts that enhance quality of life and promote inclusion, tolerance, and diversity require critical mass of dedication and purposeful funding outside of traditional sources.

Inclusive play spaces improve the quality of life for children with disabilities and their families, but also the quality of life for children without disabilities. They offer the opportunity for all children to play alongside one another which supports the physical, social and cognitive development of all children and benefits everyone.

- Children with disabilities benefit from active play, including building valuable physical and social skills in integrated, more natural environments. They develop gross motor skills, executive functioning skills, decision making and social interaction skills. The playground also allows peer interaction necessary to build peer support and improve self-esteem. It also increases the availability of age-appropriate, non-disabled role models and peer supports.

- Children without disabilities get the same benefit from the active play environment, but they also learn valuable lessons about the world, most notable that everyone has similarities and differences. They develop improved attitudes towards children with disabilities. They learn how to interact with, be friends to, assist, and advocate for peers with disabilities. It teaches them vital lessons of compassion and awareness in a natural, child-centered setting where everyone has fun together.

- All children will develop tolerance, diversity, and acceptance which serve as a basis for improved quality of life for all.

- There are also tremendous benefits for the adult community. Not only can all children take part in active play alongside one another, but parents, grandparents and adults with disabilities can experience and enjoy the space as well. Adult residential communities can enhance the quality of life for their residents with this expanded recreational space. This improves the quality of life for all members of a family and our community.

Shelly Krahmer
Fairmont, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am the parent or caregiver of a child with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202. It would be nice for my child to be able to enjoy playgrounds and not just watch other kids having fun.

Norma Medina
Faribault, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am concerned community member and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

Inclusion for our most vulnerable should always be of the utmost importance. We should always have inclusive spaces as the norm and not after thought.

Monica Joubert
Lakeville, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am the parent or caregiver of a child with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

It is my dream that all individuals will have the same opportunities and chance to enjoy playing outside, socializing with their peers and the opportunity to do so in a safe way. Inclusive and accessible playgrounds are so important and allow children to participate in activities that their typical peers without disabilities have.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth, Mora MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am concerned community member and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.
Its important for all kids to be able to play

Claire
Northfield, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am concerned community member and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

As an occupational therapy doctorate student, my education has emphasized the importance of enabling every person to participate in things that are meaningful to them, regardless of their disability status.

Through play, children learn important things about the world: personal resilience, how to interact with others, problem-solving skills, conflict resolution, and a myriad of other skills that will serve them well in their futures.

All children deserve a chance to enjoy the physical, mental, and emotional benefits provided by inclusive playgrounds, and it is well past time to advocate for equitable access.

Hannah Schwietz
Inver Grove Heights, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am the parent or caregiver of a child with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

My child would benefit from easy access to an inclusive playground. It would allow him to interact with other children and experience playing in a park that he otherwise isn't able to experience.

It's difficult to get to many parks in a wheelchair. Many do not have flat spaces. When we go to a park that does have swings specific to his needs, the struggle is often that there's only one swing and kids of all abilities migrate towards that swing. Wheelchair swings would be a great addition, in addition to other accessible equipment that would allow wheeled kids to get around playground equipment.

Stephanie McCann,
St Paul, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am the parent or caregiver of a child with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

Inclusive and accessible playgrounds are so important for a variety of reasons. Not only for the obvious of allowing children with differing abilities to play, but also for other children to see them as children just like them.

I have a child with a disability who has not been able to access playground equipment at times and the toll this takes on her both emotionally and socially is significant. I have witnessed children in wheelchairs sitting on the sidelines watching other children play and it is heartbreaking.

Sincerely,

Jennifer
Roseville, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am a person with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

The inclusive and accessible playgrounds are important to me because growing up I could only use the slides at playgrounds because of a limp, autism and also a seizure disorder. I dream of swinging for the first time but because of the seizure disorder I haven't been able to.

Del

St. Paul, MN 55123

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am the parent or caregiver of a child with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

Inclusive and accessible playgrounds are what we have been dreaming about. As a young kid, one of the best feelings I had was going to the park with my dad and mom. And just enjoy being a kid. When I became a parent I wanted that for my child.

But my child can not have those experiences because his parents are deathly scared of taking him to a park because of the fear of elopement. He deserves to enjoy what is left of his childhood doing things like going to the park like other children. Please support this legislation and allow my child that opportunity.

Thank you.

Deeqa Farah
St. Paul, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am a concerned community member and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

As an Apple Valley Resident with children I have used many of our playgrounds. Most are minimally accessible, if at all. A fully accessible playground is a benefit to parents of all children. Allowing children to expand their friendships and explore in safe ways.

I also see an expanded need for safe outdoor spaces for children to play in the wake of the pandemic. Many higher risk children are those with mental or physical disabilities. As other kids are going back to "normal" other children cannot. A fully accessible playground in Apple Valley would give a new outdoor safe place for all children to play.

Joanna
Apple Valley

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am the parent or caregiver of a child with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

My child should be able to play just like any other able body child..Why is mine discriminated against because he is in a wheelchair? He is just as important as a "normal" child.

Michelle
Annandale, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am concerned community member and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

ALL kids deserve the opportunity to play regardless of their physical capabilities. My older brother had to (and still has to) sit on the sidelines of so many activities because he's in a wheelchair. When he got into high school, he joined an adaptive floor hockey team. He absolutely loved it - his little sister wasn't the only one who needed rides to practice! I realize this doesn't have to do with playground equipment, but having the freedom to play with his peers was vital for not only his physical health but his mental and emotional well-being.

Kids with disabilities are way more resourceful than most folks give them credit for because they have to be! Modifying things in our world so they don't have to be constantly adapting themselves or even sitting out, allows them to just be kids. ALL kids should (and I would argue, need to) have the chance to play alongside their peers. Whether it's rolling across an extra wide bridge, swinging in an adaptive swing, or using extra handrails to climb to the top of the slide, kids deserve to play.

Mallory
Minnetonka

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am a person with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

It would be a safe place for disability people to have a safe and fun place to go.

Anonymous,
Shorewood Minnesota

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am the parent or caregiver of a child with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

Accessible playgrounds are about so much more than ramps! Children with developmental disabilities desperately need more *fully fenced* parks and playgrounds. The only way many of these kids can actually be safe playing outside is in an environment where their caregivers can be sure that their kids won't end up in the street or a parking lot if they lose sight of their child for a moment.

Joel Kreisel,
Hopkins

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am the parent or caregiver of a child with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

My son #FelixNeptune (feel free to look us up on IG) was born with an extremely rare genetic condition resulting in a plethora of medical diagnoses. He is cognitively typical, and currently attends a typical preschool class 4 days a week. However, he uses both a power and manual wheelchair, is non-verbal, tube fed, hard of hearing, has low muscle tone, the list goes on and on.

He starts kindergarten in the Fall at Glen Lake Elementary in Hopkins. We LOVE Hopkins school district, but have come to learn not all elementary school playgrounds are wheelchair accessible. Some have maybe an adaptive swing, or maybe one or two little things for a kiddo like mine to do.

One of the greatest things I would like to see for kids in wheelchairs is to provide AT LEAST a rubberized playground surface so they can wheel around the whole playground to interact with their peers, even if they have to stay in their chair. Better yet, ramps, wheelchair swings, musical equipment, seated/supported merry-go-round. There are so many great options that can support kids who use wheelchairs and/or have low muscle tone and are unable to sit unassisted. We need to integrate ways to play outside that aren't ALL about climbing. I understand the importance of those activities for typical development, but much of the adaptive equipment is equally fun for typically developing kiddos.

We need our schools to set the standard for inclusivity. By integrating our disabled kids into day-to-day activities we create awareness in the minds of our children at a formative age. If we instill ideas of inclusivity and compassion in our elementary schools we are helping to raise compassionate, aware teens and young adults who will pave the way for even more progress for the future of our disabled community.

Haley Brunelle
Hopkins school district,
live in Minnetonka

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am the parent or caregiver of a child with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202. 55379 Accessible playgrounds are not just for disabled children. They are for the grandparents, vets, injured or whomever are watching kids play and have fun. Ever thought of a paraplegic trying to get through sand or mulch? Grandma or grandpa with a walker or cane? This list goes on. More inclusion in life is needed all around. yes Barb Dahn -
Shakopee, MN b.dahn@msn.com

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am the parent or caregiver of a child with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

Having a child that lacks safety awareness makes it difficult for families to go out into the community. I spent almost 3 years stuck at home because our local town of Annandale only has 1 playground with a fenced area available for families to use. It is the preschool playground at the elementary school.

As a parent I spent so much time indoors because it was safer and less stressful to be outside. Having fences around playgrounds gives families the opportunity to go out into the community and be active with their children.

Children with disabilities spend a lot of time secluded in smaller classrooms in order to receive academic accommodations. Recess should be accessible to all of our kids. Can you imagine not being able to spend recess with other kids in your grade? I've been told so many times that "My kid's will be better people because of their sibling with special needs." Why shouldn't all kids get to know their sibling and be better people?

I would hope that by now our schools would be more inclusive than they were when I was in school 20+ years ago. As far as I can tell nothing has changed. Our children will grow up to be awkward around people with differences because they weren't expected to include each other in activities.

One in Five Minnesota families with children have a child with a disability or chronic health condition. Making sure our playgrounds are accessible and secure opens up the world for so many people in our community and gives our children the ability to connect with each other.

Kelly Korpela,
South Haven, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am the parent or caregiver of a child with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

My kids are much older now, but years ago we had to stop going to playgrounds because there were none enclosed by a fence that we could access.

Too many times My 2-3 year old would wander off and only be found as he came back. I couldn't keep an eye on both kids or talk to parents so we just stopped going. It was isolating and lonely and hard for the kid that really needed big motor play.

Zaidee Martin
Minneapolis, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am the parent or caregiver of a child with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

My child is attracted to busy streets, bodies of water and wide, open spaces. He likes to elope (run away) and has no concept of danger. As he gets older and bigger and stronger, catching and wrangling him is so difficult. Having a fenced in space (with still open space to run) would be so helpful.

Sarah Mueller
Minneapolis, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

My name is Erin Clotfelter, and I live in 60A. I am the parent or caregiver of a child with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

My children are autistic, and very early on, we found that playgrounds were not our friends. We needed spaces that were entirely enclosed, with fences and gates, to safely contain them.

Unless both my husband and I were able to go, parks and playgrounds were out of the question. All families should be able to enjoy a trip to the park without worrying that they will have to choose which of their children to chase down- the one headed for the pond, or the one headed to the parking lot? Accessibility can mean many things, and to some families, accessibility is a fence with a gate.

Thank you,

Erin Clotfelter
Minneapolis, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am the parent or caregiver of a child with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

Many playgrounds are partially fenced but have open gaps. All toddlers and many older kids without disabilities will make a run for it, but especially disabled children are at risk for this. Gated playgrounds are inclusive for all parents and all children. Disabled children who make a run for it, and typically developing children whose parents may be disabled and unable to chase them. And just tired parents!

Suzan Cox
St Anthony Village, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am the parent or caregiver of a child with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

Fenced in playgrounds are MUCH safer for autistic children who wander or who are attracted to water or cars. When my son was a toddler, before we even knew he was autistic, it was difficult for me to bring him to our local park because he would frequently run away from the playground (he was more interested in the nearby cars). Having a fenced area would decrease stress for parents and increase safety for kids.

Amy Gaalswyk
Minneapolis, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am the parent or caregiver of a child with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

My son is now 14. He has always loved and still loves to swing. He still enjoys playgrounds. Part of inclusive access for him would be a sign educating playground goers that a child or teen using equipment in an odd way or making odd noises or being there, even though they seem too old may be due to intellectual, developmental or sensory disabilities or challenges.

Jenny Austin
Minneapolis, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am the parent or caregiver of a child with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

My autistic son enjoys playing with other children and I want to give him that opportunity. But sometimes I can't take him to play because there is no fence between the playground and a busy street or a pond. He knows how to play with other children but he doesn't yet understand the dangers of drowning or cars. For future improvement to parks, we would appreciate consideration of these types of safety concerns.

Rebeka McRad,
Bloomington, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am concerned community member and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

There are many children and young adults with disabilities in the area and there is a need for accessible play for all! In particular there is a park by the Mercy hospital.

Sincerely,
Kathryn Pieper
Brooklyn Park, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am the parent or caregiver of a child with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202. Our kids with disabilities deserve to have access to a playground just the same as all other kids.

Abdul Diriye
Blaine, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am a person with a disability and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

As a former teacher who uses a wheelchair I saw daily how important inclusive play and opportunities are for our communities to come together. Our families and adults need to have safe spaces to come and learn from our children to see them coming together and crossing over the chasms within our society. As a small rural town we need financial help to bring our community together and to inspire other communities to bring inclusion to EVERY AREA OF LIFE.

I lived a life of exclusion and isolation and it is time that our families and young children who use wheelchairs do NOT have to live a life like I did back in the 80s and 90s. Please use your place of influence and leadership to positively impact the lives of our community AND bring inclusion to communities that are tourist destinations as well!

Jenna Udenberg
Two Harbors, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am a concerned community member and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

All children deserve the chance to play with their peers.

Mary Baumann-Spooner
St. Cloud, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am a concerned community member and am writing to you in support of HF 4202.

Think for a second about your childhood. Getting on your bike, riding around and getting into all the fresh air and trouble you could. Laughing with your friends, crossing the monkey bars, king of the mountain, sliding down that metal slide that burned your butt even before you got to the bottom. Despite the falls, scratches, bruises and battered egos at times, those experiences are what built us into the people we are today. Now, imagine you have a disability.... ANY disability that denies you those experiences. Imagine sitting, stuck at the window or on a bench watching "them" play, building memories and friendships that may last a month or a lifetime. Imagine those experiences being held back from you because "you're different." Children with a disability already KNOW they are different. There is no reason to re-emphasize this fact.

If that didn't work to hit this home, try this. You have children or "A" child. Imagine driving by a playground and they see their friends there. They yell out in excitement, "(MOM) (DAD), can we stop and play? I see my friends!!!!" You pause.... You pause because you know that their crutches won't support them properly in the sand, or there is a single rope fence at the edge of the park that marks the riverbank. It rained an hour ago and her power chair will get stuck in the mud. Now, tell them they can't go play because their childhood doesn't mean as much to the world as "normal" kids.

That's right. Look them in the eye and say "your childhood means less than a normal kid." If you can do that or even READ that without a tear forming in your eyes, you have NO business representing anyone or any community. The fact that this even has to be a debated issue makes me weep for the world we are leaving for our children.

Adam Burling,
Sauk Rapids, MN

March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: HF4202

Dear Chairman Lee and Capital Investment Committee Members,

I am concerned community member and I am writing to you today in support of HF 4202.

Everyone deserves the right to play and it is our duty as citizens to make sure we develop inclusive playgrounds in all communities to reflect our priorities.

Amie

Waite Park, MN