

Higher Education Committee Members

I am in support of HF 1972/SF2053 to provide competitive grants to expand Minnesota inclusive postsecondary education options. I am encouraged by the House Higher Education Committee members recognizing the need for Minnesota postsecondary education options for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities including autism (IDD). There are approximately 2,000 Minnesota students with IDD completing 12th grade each year. In addition, there are 10,000 college age Minnesotans with IDD between the ages of 18-22. Expanding postsecondary education options for students with IDD creates a pathway to meaningful credentials, competitive integrated employment, and independent living with appropriate supports and services.

The proposed legislation does need some changes that will strengthen its impact and reach; I recommend the following amendments to the bill:

1. Open grant eligibility to include Minnesota public and private institutions of higher education.
2. Add students with intellectual and developmental disabilities to the description of students.
3. Expand the use of the grant funding to include seed funding for an eligible institution of higher education to dedicate staff and resources to expand enrollment to include students with intellectual and developmental disabilities including autism in their campus community.
4. Include grant annual reporting requirements to provide diversity data to document equitable access to the postsecondary education option across racial, ethnic, linguistic, socio economic and geographic cross sections of the student population.
5. Eliminate residential campus experience as an eligibility requirement as a number of Minnesota institutions of higher education do not have campus housing but have excellent educational programs that could become inclusive.

My amendment recommendations are based on my advocacy for my daughter with an intellectual disability. Jean is 20 and is attending college. Unfortunately, due to the lack of Minnesota options she is attending college in Pennsylvania. This is not an option or a good fit for many Minnesotans with IDD. That is why I am continuing to advocate for expanding Minnesota postsecondary education options for students with IDD. Here are some key reasons I am asking the Higher Education Committee to amend HF1972:

1. There is a parent-led initiative to expand Minnesota inclusive postsecondary education options. The Minnesota Inclusive Higher Education Consortium (MIHEC) is a collaborative group of stakeholders including inclusive higher education institutions, local education agencies, key state agencies, advocates, families, legislators and nonprofits. MIHEC is committed to expanding Minnesota postsecondary education opportunities to all interested youth, young adults and adults with IDD, including students with IDD from diverse ethnic, cultural, linguistic, geographic and socio-economic backgrounds. Expanding the grant eligibility to include Minnesota institutions of higher education would lead to widening the pathway to inclusive, affordable postsecondary education options across Minnesota that offer meaningful credentials that lead to employment for Minnesotans with IDD.
2. Expanding postsecondary education options for Minnesotans with IDD is consistent with the stated Minnesota Olmstead Plan goals and the Minnesota interagency team efforts to improve the employment opportunities for Minnesotans with IDD.

3. Expanding postsecondary education options for Minnesotans with IDD is consistent with the stated OHE 2025 Attainment Goal of 70% of Minnesota adults age 25-44 will have attained a postsecondary certificate or degree by 2025.

4. Opening the competitive grant eligibility to include Minnesota institutions of higher education will provide more postsecondary options across Minnesota and increase access to the certificate/degree programs that match with students' interests and strengths.

5. Opening the competitive grant eligibility to include Minnesota institutions of higher education will create the opportunity for equitable access to financially affordable postsecondary education options.

Thank you for your consideration and support of HF1972. I encourage you to amend the bill to strengthen the impact and reach as you consider including the proposal in the Higher Education omnibus bill.

Sincerely

Mary Hauff
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District 48A Constituent