

March 16, 2022

Re: House File 3896 DISABILITY SERVICES ACCESSIBILITY TASK FORCE AND PILOT PROJECTS.

Disability services in the state of Minnesota are inaccessible. People with neurodevelopmental disabilities cannot access services without a caregiver providing support. Not every disabled person has a caregiver or support person. Applying for disability services should be the most accessible thing that the State of Minnesota does.

As a person who provides direct support to hundreds of disabled adults in the community, I witness the desperation, frustration, hopelessness, and justified anger at systems that create barriers for those who need help the most. And I've experienced it firsthand.

Minnesotans who are most at risk, who need the most intensive support, are often invisible when it comes to disability services.

A person who is unable to complete forms is denied services.

A person who cannot mail things is denied services.

A person who needs to know a process before they can participate in a process is denied services.

A person who has a reading or writing disability is denied services.

A person who is a visual learner is denied services.

A person who has communication barriers is denied services.

A person who experiences emotional dysregulation is denied services.

A person who needs extra time to complete tasks is denied services.

And there is nothing we can do about it. If we can't fill out a 20-page application form, how could we possibly appeal a denial based on our disability-related needs within a certain timeline?

So we go homeless or hungry or uncleaned or bedridden or institutionalized or die. Minnesotans have died of suicide because they could not access services that they desperately needed.

Minnesota has a responsibility to the disabled people within the state to ensure that no disabled person is excluded from disability services because they are too disabled.

Please support House File 3896, disabled Minnesotans desperately need an accessible process of obtaining disability services. Lack of access is killing us.

Miigwech,

Jules Edwards

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Board Member, Minnesota Ombudsman for American Indian Families

Board Member, The Arc Minnesota