

Letter of Support

Date: February 10th, 2022
Bill: HF 2017 - [Minnesota Employment and Retention of Employees with Disabilities](#)
Task Force Report: [Strategies for Attracting and Retaining State Employees with Disabilities](#)

ATTN: Minnesota House State Government Finance and Elections Committee

Dear Chair Nelson and Members of the Committee.

The Minnesota Council on Disability is leading efforts to increase disability representation in the Minnesota state government workforce. We request that the House State Government Finance and Elections committee make this bill a priority in the 2022 Legislative Session. We believe that more disability representation in our state enterprise, especially those in leadership positions, will lead to better decisions being made around state disability policies.

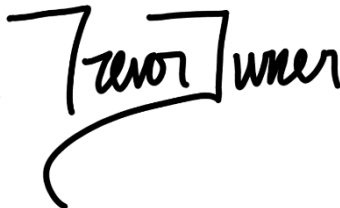
HF 2017 would codify the recommendations made by the Advisory Task Force on the Employment & Retention of Employees with Disabilities. In addition, this bill revises Minnesota Statutes Chapter 43A, which governs the hiring and retention of employees. Finally, this bill would demonstrate the State of Minnesota's commitment to the hiring, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities by: modernizing outdated and potentially discriminatory language, creating more clarity & consistency on disability employment policy, training/educating hiring managers, providing a support structure for employees with disabilities, and adding capacity for essential equity work.

This bill does the following:

- Codifies [Gov. Dayton Executive Order 14-14](#) & [Gov. Walz Executive Order 19-15](#)
- Improves the implementation and execution of the [Connect 700](#) program
- Provides direction to MMB regarding disability policies and employment
- Codifies and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of ADA coordinators in state agencies
- Standardizes the training of hiring managers and ADA coordinators across all state agencies
- Establishes a data collection and reporting structure on the advancement of employees with disabilities

Minnesotans often face difficult or even insurmountable barriers in finding and maintaining employment. The state of Minnesota is no exception. Unfortunately, Minnesota does not have adequate disability representation in its workforce. Far too often, policies that significantly impact Minnesotans with disabilities are decided by a small group of non-disabled policymakers. Minnesotans with disabilities need not only our voices to be heard, but a seat at the state governing table. This is a "*Nothing About Us Without Us*" bill, which would require more consultation with people with disabilities and those who are disability employment experts. Increasing disability employment and retention among the state government workforce creates a pipeline of future leaders and policymakers in our state enterprise system. When Minnesotans with disabilities make decisions in our agencies, the disability community in our state will be better represented in, and better served by, our state government.

Trevor Turner
Public Policy Director
Minnesota Council on Disability

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Trevor Turner' in a cursive, stylized font.

Connect700 Timeline

[1981 Minnesota Statute Chapter 43A](#)

- Established the 700-hour trial on-the-job program for people with disabilities

[1983 Minnesota Amendment to 43A.10 Subd. 8](#)

- Amended problematic language for wheelchair users

[1984 Minnesota Amendment to 43A.10 Subd. 8](#)

- Amended problematic language for disabled persons

[1985 Minnesota Amendment to 43A.10 Subd. 8](#)

- Amended to include promotions and job transfers

[1987 Minnesota Amendment to 43A.10 Subd. 8](#)

- Amended to allow up to 3 people with disabilities to perform the same position as a team

[1990 Minnesota Amendment to 43A.10 Subd. 8](#)

- Amended to replace variations of 'handicap' with 'disability'

[1995 Minnesota Amendment to 43A.10 Subd. 8 - 43A.15 Subd 14](#)

- Moved 700-hour trial on-the-job program to new section and subdivision of 43a.

[2004 Minnesota Amendment to 43A.10 Subd. 8 - 43A.15 Subd 14](#)

- Amended to update state hiring process, from examination to selection process
- Amended to update state hiring process, from examination to selection process

[2014 Governor Mark Dayton Executive Order 14-14](#)

- Ordered State Agencies to increase percentage of employees with disabilities
- Ordered Department of Management & Budget to increase awareness of and keep data on 700-hour trial on-the-job program for people with disabilities across state agencies
- Ordered MMB to work with MNIT to improve accessibility of application process
- Ordered State Disability Agency Forum to serve as advisors and monitor progress of program
- Established goal of increasing disability employment from less than 4% to more than 7% by 2018

[2019 Minnesota Amendment to 43a.15 Subd 14](#)

- Amended to eliminate "unpaid" option for 700-hour trial on-the-job program

[2019 Tim Walz Executive Order 19-15](#)

- Established MMB goal of increasing disability employment from 7% to more than 10%
- Ordered all agencies to develop plans to hire more people with disabilities
- Ordered MNIT Chief Information Accessibility Officer & Governor's Workforce Development board to advise and monitor program along with State Disability Agency Forum

[2019 Minn. Laws 1st Spl. Sess.Chap. 10 Art. 2 Sec. 24 Subd. 3](#)

- Established Advisory Task Force on State Employment & Retention of Employees with Disabilities. Must submit report by January 2021.

[2020 Star Tribune January 28th- Chris Serres](#)

- "Minnesota state jobs program for people with disabilities fails to live up to promise"

[2021 Advisory Task Force on State Employment & Retention of Employees with Disabilities Report](#)

- "Strategies for Attracting & Retaining State Employees with Disabilities"
- Report included policy and legislative recommendations

[2021 HF2017 Reyer - State Employment & Retention of Employees with Disabilities Bill](#)

- [Representative Reyer \(DFL, 51B Eagan\)](#) introduces HF2017 into the House of Representatives which takes recommendations from the Task Force to codify into state statute

[2021 SF1570 Westrom – State Employment & Retention of Employees with Disabilities Bill](#)

- [Senator Westrom \(R, 12 Elbow Lake\)](#) introduces SF1570 into the Senate which takes recommendations from the Task Force to codify into state statute