

Madam Chair and members,

We are writing today on behalf of The Arc Minnesota, Metropolitan Center for Independent Living, Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance, Minnesota Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities, and Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome - nonprofit advocacy organizations that work to promote the independence and inclusion of people with disabilities.

Our organizations stand in opposition to HF 4437, the proposed amendment to the state constitution on transportation funding. While we understand proponents' reasoning for seeking dedicated sales tax revenue collected on vehicle parts and repairs for transportation needs, as the amendment proposes, this will result in less funding in the state budget for critical health and human services priorities.

Each legislative session, members of the disability community work in coalition to advance cost-effective legislation aimed at achieving positive outcomes and equity for Minnesotans with disabilities while working against proposals that would cut health and human services funding and supports. If this transportation amendment is adopted, advocates will face even more barriers to obtaining adequate funds for disability services that support lives of independence and inclusion in the community. Any divergence of resources away from the General Fund, as this constitutional amendment aims to do, would force our state to make incredibly hard choices about the quality of services available to Minnesotans with disabilities as well as eligibility criteria.

The amendment would also jeopardize funding for other parts of the transportation budget. Disability advocates have been strong supporters of transportation options that help people with disabilities be more independent and included in their communities, including public transit and specialized transit systems like Metro Mobility. Similar to human services, transit funding would compete for fewer General Fund dollars, possibly leading to service cuts and/or fare increases for people who often struggle financially.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns, and for your consideration of the impact this proposal would have on Minnesotans with disabilities. We urge you to vote no on HF 4437, and to consider the negative policy implications of similar constitutional amendments that divert funds from Minnesota's General Fund.

Sincerely,

Jesse Bethke Gomez, Executive Director
Metropolitan Center for Independent Living

Sheryl Grassie, Executive Director
Minnesota Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities

Sara Messelt, Executive Director
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Alicia Munson, Public Policy Director
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