

Dear House Workforce Development and Finance Committee,

I am writing to support HF 1697 to provide increased funding to the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) program.

People with mental illness experience a disproportionately high rates of unemployment. Working for an agency that provides Individual Placement and Support, Guild, I see the positive effect employment has on not only the individuals we serve and the community. Individuals experience an increase in self-confidence, self-esteem, feel good about contributing to society, rely less on mental health services and bring home a paycheck. The community benefits from gaining needed workers, supports to assist individuals maintain employment and access to wider pool of work candidates.

Funding is critical to maintain services for the most individuals possible. Cuts to the program reduce the number of individuals we can serve, which impacts the number of individuals who possibly won't be able to enter the workforce. Funding would be cut by 27% leading to an estimated 350 individuals losing access to services.

The increase in funding would preserve services for 350 individuals served by one-time funds and would allow the program to serve an additional 325 Minnesotans a year! Increased access to services throughout Minnesota is a critical need. This would expand geographic access and expand access to services for individual with serious mental illness who are Black Indigenous, and People of Color.

Minnesota leads the nation in the percentage of IPS participants who are employed. Guild Employment Services is proud to be an agency who contributes to that high percentage for its citizens.

Best,

Dana Conroy