March 20, 2023

To whom it may concern,

My name is Jeff Prendergast and I am a Health Programs Manager at Special Olympics Minnesota. I wanted to reach out and share my appreciation and support around the MDH disability health equity budget proposal.

As an organization, Special Olympics Minnesota serves nearly 6,000 individuals with an intellectual disability here in Minnesota and offers not just an opportunity to compete in sports, but also offers a community and resources to those we serve. We have been fortunate in the last year or so to grow our collaborative efforts with the Minnesota Department of Health and funding for certain projects in this budget will only help those efforts. For example, funding that focuses on inclusive health trainings for public health and healthcare professionals, community-based organizations and others working with the disability community aligns with efforts within Special Olympics Minnesota to improve the training and education of healthcare professionals who see our athletes.

Chronic conditions and educating our athletes on healthy choices continues to be a ongoing efforts within our organization. The opportunity to apply and receive grant funding from this budget will allow us to better offer programing year round that can have a direct impact on our athletes overall lifestyle and daily activities.

I know from my own experience of being able to work with our athletes year round, how much having access to programing and quality healthcare access makes a difference to them. It is really powerful to see what these individuals can do when given the chance and same resources as those without a disability. They truly live up to our athlete oath of “Let me win, but if I cannot, let me be brave in the attempt.”

These are only a few ways the passing of this budget can have a profound impact on the individuals we serve, but all of those in Minnesota with a disability. We are extremely appreciative that the Department of Health is placing more emphasis on those Minnesotans with disabilities and are happy to support the budget being proposed. We look forward to continuing our collaborative efforts on going within the Department of Health and encourage you to support and pass the proposed budget.

Thank you!

Jeff Prendergast

Health Programs Manager

Special Olympics Minnesota