

ACT

Advocating Change Together

1821 University Avenue West, Suite 306 South, St. Paul, MN 55104

Phone: (651) 641-0297 • Fax: (651) 641-4053 • E-mail: act@selfadvocacy.org • Web Site: www.selfadvocacy.org

Information on SF 858 (Abeler, Hoffman)/HF 923 (McDonald)

Background:

This bill is being sponsored by The ACT Center for Disability Leadership, which is dedicated to training and empowering Minnesotans with intellectual and other disabilities to become empowered self-advocates and strong, contributing members of their communities. The ACT Center has been operating since 1979 and serves about 1,700 people annually through the Olmstead Academy and a variety of trainings, workshops, remote curriculums, conferences, peer-to-peer support networks and community building opportunities. In 2020, The ACT Center was the recipient of the O'Brien Award for Organizational Achievement by Human Rights Educators USA. In addition to delivering its researched based services, The ACT Center is also the fiscal agent and administrative support entity for six regional Self-Advocates of Minnesota (SAM) chapters.

The ACT Center addresses the long-standing disparity between the rights persons with disabilities have and those they actually exercise. The Americans with Disabilities Act, Olmstead Supreme Court decision, court rulings, de-institutionalization efforts and now Waiver Re-imagine, provide the framework for persons with disabilities, to be more involved in the selection of government funded support services designed to address their individual needs, and to exercise more control over how those services are delivered.

The Challenge:

However, in spite of this emphasis on self-determination, the government funding systems to encourage it have been woefully inadequate. The ACT Center, SAM and other self-advocacy groups rely upon private foundations and generosity of businesses and individuals to provide the self-determination and empowerment services that are emphasized by the policy frameworks. Simply put, the current funding models are insufficient to maintain and expand self-advocacy and empowerment services at a time when the public policies are encouraging more of it.

The Solution:

This bill does the following to address the disparity between the public policy directions and the ability for persons with disabilities to learn and exercise their rights:

1. Appropriates \$286,000 in the biennium for The ACT Center to deliver its solid foundation of successful programs that advance self-advocacy, disability equality and disability inclusion. The programs will be delivered via statewide conferences and a statewide network. The training will be focused on self-advocacy, choosing service options by exercising informed choices, becoming more fully engaged in their local communities, and through participating in an intensive annual emerging leaders' program.
2. Appropriates \$210,000 in the biennium for The ACT Center to award grants to the six Regional SAM chapters to provide outreach to persons working and living in institutional settings about community alternatives. Peer led skill training sessions will occur relating to housing, employment, education, transportation, emerging service reform initiatives and in connecting with individuals who can help them make informed decisions and plan for transitions.

For further information contact Mary Kay Kennedy, Executive Director, The ACT Center, 651-641-0297, Kennedy@selfadvocacy.org or Bob Brick, 651-248-4590, robertjbrick@yahoo.com.