



RE: **HF 687 Inclusive Higher Education**
ATTN: Minnesota House Higher Education Finance and Policy Committee
Date: February 16th, 2023

Honorable Chair Pelowski and Members of the Committee,

The Minnesota Council on Disability urges the committee to support HF 687 which would establish the Inclusive Higher Education Technical Assistance Center and an inclusive higher education grant program. This bill will help expand access to higher education opportunities for Minnesotans with intellectual disabilities, aligning with the Council on Disability's mission and support for any effort that expands access and inclusion for Minnesotans with disabilities.

For many, college is a pathway to meaningful careers and stable employment, a way to grow and fulfill dreams. Minnesotans with intellectual disabilities have these dreams as much as anyone else, but currently, less than three percent of this community have access to postsecondary education offerings in-state. Inclusive higher education provides positive outcomes for people with intellectual disabilities—including higher levels of employment, wages, and independent living. Furthermore, this approach to higher education supports the idea of independence and living in the community of one's choice, guaranteed by the Olmstead Decision.

This bill not only provides more higher education options for Minnesotans with intellectual disabilities, but also makes our higher education institutions more inclusive and accessible places of learning. Expanding inclusive higher education is an essential part of building an inclusive Minnesota for people with intellectual disabilities. It will strengthen Minnesota's economy and workforce because people with intellectual disabilities who complete postsecondary education are more likely to be employed, earn a competitive wage, and live in homes and communities of their choice. Building a society where people with disabilities belong means expanding access to places and opportunities that have not always been accessible, including Minnesota's higher education system. This legislation is a key opportunity to make that accessibility a reality. Please support the college dreams of Minnesotans with intellectual disabilities by supporting HF 687.

Sincerely,

Trevor Turner
Public Policy Director
Minnesota Council on Disability