

Letter of Support: HF 2017
House State Government Finance and Elections Committee



February 8, 2022

Chair Nelson and Members of the Committee,

The Arc Minnesota supports the passage of **HF 2017**, a bill regarding the employment and retention of employees with disabilities in our state government workforce. People with disabilities often face difficult or even insurmountable barriers in both finding and maintaining employment and the state of Minnesota is no exception.

The state does not have adequate disability representation in its workforce. Many people with disabilities do not work full time or have a job at all. Minnesota has a high percentage of people with disabilities who are unemployed¹. This includes many people who want to work and build careers. Disparities in employment are compounded for Queer, Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (QBIPOC) with disabilities.²

Far too often, policies that impact Minnesotans with disabilities are being decided by a small group of non-disabled decision makers. People with disabilities must be centered in systems and social change - including employment policy - because they have power, know what is best for themselves, and know what is needed to enhance opportunity and quality of life.

Minnesotans with disabilities need a seat at the state governing table. This is a *"Nothing About Us Without Us"* bill which would require more consultation with people with disabilities and those who are disability employment experts. Increasing disability employment and retention among the state government workforce creates a pathway for future leaders and policy makers in our state enterprise system. When Minnesotans with disabilities are making the decisions in our cabinet agencies, the disability community in our state will be better off.

The Arc Minnesota supports public policies like **HF 2017** which are founded in the principles of human & civil rights, self-advocacy & self-direction, equity & true belonging, and disability & racial justice. We ask members of this committee to support the passage of this bill so our state can be a model employer for people with disabilities, state employees with disabilities have the support to serve the state of Minnesota, and opportunities to lead our state agencies.

Julia Burkstaller
Public Policy Director, The Arc Minnesota

¹ https://mn.gov/admin/assets/minnesotans-with-disabilities-popnotes-march2017_tcm36-283045_tcm36-283045.pdf

² <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/article/2020/people-of-color-face-systemic-disparities-in-minnesotas-labor-market>