

2019 Public Policy Agenda

The Minnesota Council on Disability supports policies that promote Access, Equity and Independence so Minnesotans with disabilities can live, work and play in their communities.

The Minnesota Council on Disability Operational Budget

The Council seeks a \$154K increase in our FY 20-21 appropriation for rising operational and IT expenses. The Minnesota Council on Disability (MCD) exists to ensure programmatic, physical, and digital access to government for all Minnesota taxpayers and to promote Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility in the private sector to fuel a stronger Minnesota economy. The agency is a free policy, training, and technical resource for people with disabilities and their families, the private sector, and federal, state, and local governments to strengthen communities.

Accessibility

#MNParksForAll

Make our state parks inclusive and accessible to all Minnesotans. Our 75 state parks and recreation areas have barriers which prevent people with disabilities from a full park experience. In 2018, \$500,000 was secured in bonding funds to bring park facilities up to the Americans with Disabilities Act standards. DNR's Accessible Outdoors Project is now developing project designs to make Fort Snelling and William O'Brien State Parks inclusive and accessible for all Minnesotans. The Council supports bonding funds to develop designs for an additional state park.

Accessibility of Public Buildings

Ensure accessibility of government programs and services. Modify the State Access Statute (MN State Statute 326B.106) to remove outdated language about the accessibility of public buildings. Current language is confusing, conflicts with state and federal law, and may delay the removal of barriers in public buildings. This "housekeeping" bill will ensure that programs, services and activities provided by state or local government is accessible to people with disabilities.

Accessibility of Assisted Living Facilities

Establish accessible standards within new Assisted Living licensure. Minnesota is one of the few states that does not license Assisted Living facilities. These facilities are regulated under a variety of building code classifications based on number and type of residents. This often results in limited accessibility options for assisted living residents. New Assisted Living licensure should expand accessible facilities.

Voters with Disabilities

Improve accessibility of absentee ballots for Minnesotans with disabilities. Amend MN 203B.045 to permit a voter with a disability to receive and submit absentee voting information in an accessible electronic format.

PCA Driving Reimbursement

Expand reimbursable driving activities for PCAs in order to ensure the implementation of a person with disability's service plan. Under current statute, PCA's are not able to be reimbursed for driving their clients with disabilities for activities defined in the service plan. The Council supports amendment 18-7306 to MN 256B.0659 Subdivision 1.

Data Accessibility Standards

Enhance data accessibility standards in Minnesota government. The Council supports adoption of best practices for universal accessibility of legislative documents produced for the public.

Equity and Independence

Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (CAV) Policy

Establish CAV policy standards that include Level IV autonomy. Autonomous Vehicles have tremendous potential to promote the independence and equity of people with disabilities to live, work, and play in the community of their choice. Level IV autonomy requires no steering wheel and no license drivers which will ensure people with disabilities have maximum access to CAV technology.

Transportation Network Companies (TNC) Legislation

Increase equitable, on-demand transportation services for Minnesotans with disabilities. Transportation Network Companies (TNC) hold broad challenges and benefits for people with disabilities to maintain choice and independence. The Council supports policy solutions that ensure that TNC companies fulfill their legal obligation to provide equitable services to all.

Education Discrimination

Promote non-exclusionary disciplinary practices of students with disabilities. According to student discipline data, significant disparities in suspensions and expulsions exist for students with disabilities and other minority populations. Students with disabilities are twice as likely to be suspended or expelled compared to their peers without a disability. Supporting students with disabilities in the classroom will reduce instances of suspension or expulsion and ensure equitable access to public education for all students.

Disability Parking Authorization

Expand authorization of disability parking permits to physical therapists to increase access to permits for people with disabilities, especially in rural Minnesota.

Adaptive Fitness Grants

Establish a grant fund to expand adaptive fitness options.

Legislative Research and Projects

#MNParksForAll

The Council on Disability is working with the Department of Natural Resources to design and implement a fully inclusive, 72 hour recreational experience at William O'Brien State Park and Ft. Snelling State Park utilizing bonding funds secured in 2018. Future bonding funds will be sought for construction in 2020. Processes for predesign work have been established to create greater efficiencies for design work and construction at other state parks. These parks will serve as models for similar upgrades to additional parks.

Roundabout Accessibility for Pedestrians

Roundabout standards and design vary depending on governance and funding by city, county and state. The Council is collaborating with MNDOT in order to evaluate safety and access of state-funded roundabouts for pedestrians with disabilities, specifically blind and low-vision users.

Sign Language Interpreters

The Council will engage with and support the Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, Deafblind, & Hard of Hearing Commission to identify and support policy solutions to increasing communication access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans across the state.