



# 2019 Annual Report

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## About the Agency

The Minnesota Council on Disability (MCD) is a state agency created in 1973 by the Minnesota Legislature tasked to advise the Governor, the State Legislature, state agencies, and members of the public on disability issues. The Council operates through a small staff and is governed by a council appointed by the governor. MCD provides leadership to empower and strengthen the rights of Minnesotans with disabilities. Our Council collaborates with the public and private sectors as a policy, training and technical resource advisor.

## Our Work

The Minnesota Council on Disability analyzes legislative initiatives and advises how proposed policies will impact the disability community. The goal is to ensure that policymakers understand the effects of their decisions on Minnesotans with disabilities.

MCD examines issues and disseminates information fairly and objectively, promoting self-sufficiency and choice for all individuals. The work of the Council strives to empower Minnesotans, so that opportunity expands throughout the state and the quality of life is improved for all. MCD provides customized training on a variety of issues and serves as a technical expert on disability matters.

The Council works on a wide breadth of issues ranging from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), building access, digital and electronic access, access to culture and recreation, emergency preparedness, transportation matters, employment rights, and much more. Where disability is involved, the Council is a resource for all.

The Minnesota Council on Disability works towards living in a world free of barriers. Where there are no barriers, there are fewer limitations.

## Public Policy

The Minnesota Council on Disability worked on many public policy issues in 2019.

### Legislative Preview

#### *2019 Legislative Forum*

In December, the Minnesota Council on Disability convened the annual **Legislative Forum**, a community discussion between legislators and their constituents. A wide range of issues were discussed, such as autonomous vehicles, Disability Waiver Rate System (DWRS), the Personal Care Assistant (PCA) workforce shortage, and a 7% cut to the Centers for Medicaid Service (CMS). Senator Jerry Relph moderated the event, sharing his goals as a committee member of the Health and Human Services Committee and the Judiciary Committee.

Several notable policy stakeholders participated in the discussion. Senator Jerry Relph moderated the policy panel, which included: Human Rights Commissioner Kevin Lindsey, Olmstead Office Director Darlene Zangara, Department of Human Services Legislative Director Heidi Hamilton, and staff member of the Governor's Advisory Task Force on Connected and Autonomous Vehicles Jay Heitpas. Speaker of the House Melissa Hortman offered supportive commentary and vowed her commitment to disability issues in the upcoming session.

Members and advocates from the disability community also participated in a panel. Participants included the Minnesota Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities, The Arc Minnesota, the PCA Reform Coalition, Lutheran Social Services, Brain Injury Alliance, and the Minnesota Association of Centers for Independent Living. Each organization presented their legislative goals for the year and what they hoped to accomplish.

Audience attendance was excellent and included several freshman and experienced legislators from both parties. The open forum in the final segment of the event gave the audience an opportunity to participate. Total attendance was anywhere from 50 to 75 people.

#### *2019 Agency-Led Legislative Successes*

Thank you to Senator Draheim, Representative Mahoney, Representative Schultz, and Senator Houseley for authoring and supporting these bills.

### Accessibility of Public Buildings

**HF772/SF937** updates outdated language in Minnesota's building code in regards to the accessibility of public buildings. Language from this bill was included in the Jobs Omnibus bill. This change in code will clarify a public entity's obligation for making new buildings and remodeled portions of existing public buildings to be accessible to and usable by people with disabilities.

### **Accessibility of Assisted Living Facilities**

The Council collaborated with the MN Department of Health and the legislative workgroup in developing the language and the framework for legislation around accessibility standards in the licensure of assisted living facilities and elder care. With the passage of an eldercare bill this session, additional work must be done after session to clarify technical standards. The Minnesota Council on Disability will continue its involvement to implement high accessibility standards in the rulemaking process by collaborating with the Department of Health.

### **Minnesota Council on Disability Operating Budget**

The Council on Disability was appropriated a \$154k budget increase in the Health and Human Services Omnibus Bill. This increase in critical funding to the budget baseline will allow the Minnesota Council on Disability to maintain both staffing levels and the delivery of its programmatic services. This ensures our agency can deliver effective advocacy and technical knowledge to the State of Minnesota and other stakeholders for people with disabilities.

### *2019 Disability Community Legislative Successes*

#### **Metro Mobility Services**

The state budget now separates the appropriation for Metro Mobility from the general operating budget of the Metropolitan Council. This policy change alleviates the pressures of a growing need from Metro Mobility away from the bus and rail system. Metro Mobility also received a one-time funding increase for the next biennium to address the growth in the program. Additionally, the service area has expanded to service the community of Lakeville. Finally, Metro Mobility and the Department of Human Services was granted the ability to share data to access federal funds for certain rides.

#### **Special Education Funding**

Special education in Minnesota saw a \$91 million increase in funding to the base of the first biennium (2020-2021) and over \$142 million over the base in the second biennium (2022-2023). A \$90 million appropriation will address a cross-subsidy, which is how much school districts have to pay to cover unfunded state and federal mandates. That gap has grown to be greater than \$800 million statewide.

#### **Rare Diseases Council**

An advisory council to advocate for the research and treatment of rare diseases was created this session. The Chloe Barnes Advisory Council was created to represent the 1 in 10 Minnesotans who are affected by one of 7,000 rare diseases with only 500 treatments.

#### **Medical Assistance Spend-Down**

Funding was increased to bring the Medical Assistance spend-down to 100 percent of federal poverty guidelines by July 1, 2022. This will put up to \$200 per month back into people's pockets to help them stay independent.

**Healthcare Access Fund**

The legislature permanently removed an expiration date called a “sunset” to the state’s provider tax. This policy change will protect healthcare for 1.2 million low income Minnesotans to access needed services well into the future.

**MA-TEFRA Parental Fees**

Funding was provided to reduce parental fees for TEFRA (Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act) by 15%. This program allows parents to receive in-home supports and medical services for their children with disabilities through Medical Assistance (MA) as a supplement to private insurance. Enrollment and renewal of this process was also streamlined to make it easier for families to navigate the bureaucratic system of disability services.

## Engaging our Community

The Minnesota Council on Disability collaborates with public and private partners to effectively serve as the voice in our government for people with disabilities.

### Advocacy

#### *ADA Training*

MCD provides technical assistance and education on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and accessibility concerns across Minnesota. MCD is uniquely positioned to assist anyone who needs more information on the ADA and designing for an inclusive experience. As a core agency operation, this is a public service that is good for the disability community and businesses alike. In 2018, MCD staff conducted 12 presentations with a total of 503 attendees. In addition, staff answered a variety of calls from community members and business owners with accessibility questions.

### Community

#### *28<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ADA Celebration*

A coalition of disability organizations and state agencies, in partnership with the Science Museum of Minnesota, organized a celebration to recognize the 28th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The theme focused on **ADA & Mental Health: Removing the Stigma**. The event featured entertainment, speakers, and an official proclamation from the Governor's office. Approximately **220 individuals attended this event** and celebrated the 28 years of history made. **Marya Hornbacher**, the keynote speaker, is a Minneapolis-based award-winning writer, journalist, teacher and lecturer whose body of work includes a huge range of topics, including writing, literature, feminism, ethics, and mental health. Entertainment included **Sam Miltich and Friends** presenting "The Improvised Life: Exploring Intersections of Mental Health & Creativity through Jazz," a program highlighting cultural contributions of famous artists with mental illness (e.g. Thelonious Monk) and inspiring hope through Sam's own story and original compositions. **Adina Burke**, who identifies as a bisexual woman with Cerebral Palsy, also used storytelling through spoken word poetry and punk music to address issues of sexuality and ableism.

#### *2018 Minnesota State Fair Booth*

The Minnesota Council on Disability hosted a booth at the Minnesota State Fair with information focused around emergency preparedness, mental health, and Connected and Autonomous vehicles. In addition, MCD gave out ADA posters, parking violation notices, emergency preparedness materials, and #MNParksForAll buttons. In addition, MCD was available for information and hosted agency commissioners and officials, artists, disability partner organizations, Keep Moving Forward interviewees, military personnel, MCD staff and council members, and other various guests. MCD also provided ASL services and CART services on a schedule and provided other accessibility information.