



August 08, 2021

Minnesota Council on Disability
1600 University Avenue W.
Suite 8
Saint Paul, MN 55104

The Minnesota Council on Disability (MCD) has made the difficult decision not to attend the 2021 State Fair.

Throughout the summer, we looked to government leadership and State Fair leadership to create a safe and welcoming environment for Minnesotans with disabilities and aging Minnesotans. Unfortunately, our leaders have not stepped up to require masks, vaccines, or crowd limits at the State Fair. Our state has not reached a level of vaccinations that creates herd immunity. We are currently experiencing another COVID-19 wave due to the Delta variant (including outbreaks at many other fairs around the state). Minnesota is dangerously close to crossing the 5.0% positivity rate, which the CDC would label as “substantial spread.”

In their desire to return to normal, Minnesotans have resisted masking. Some have resisted vaccinations, despite the disproportionate effect that COVID-19 has on Minnesotans with disabilities and aging Minnesotans. By not creating a safe place for all Minnesotans to gather, MCD’s presence at the State Fair this year would reinforce the message to society that the lives of people with disabilities are less important. But, others have attempted to frame this issue as freedom from vaccines or masks rather than as a right for Minnesotans with disabilities to be healthy and alive.

MCD cannot endorse the decision to make masking optional at the State Fair. We cannot support the refusal to make hard decisions that will upset some but likely save many. People with disabilities are rarely at the front of social conversations about right and wrong, equality and rights. This lack of action continues the trend of de-prioritizing marginalized communities. These policies, or lack of policies, appear to be overlooking Minnesotans with disabilities and other marginalized communities, making people’s health a secondary priority. This lack of leadership and policies does not represent our state’s diverse racial, ethnic, aging, or disability communities -- all of which have higher risks from COVID-19.

We believe that this letter can serve as a wake-up call to our leaders across government and the leadership of the State Fair that it is never too late to do the right thing and that society can and must do better. We need to implement stronger vaccine, masking, and crowd requirements at the State Fair.

The implicit message that Minnesotans with disabilities are asked not to attend is an unacceptable alternative.

Sincerely,

Nikki Villavicencio, Chair, Ramsey County

Trent Dilks, Vice Chair, Stearns County

Saido Abdirashid, Council Member, Hennepin County

Dawn Bly, Council Member, Polk County

Andrew Christensen, Council Member, Rice County

Christy Caez Claudio, Council Member, Hennepin County

John Fechter, Council Member, Chisago County

Jennifer Foley, Council Member, Stearns County

David Johnson, Council Member, Beltrami County

Hope Johnson, Council Member, Waseca County

Leigh Lake, Council Member, Otter Tail County

Judith Moe, Council Member, Hennepin County

Quinn Nystrom, Council Member, Crow Wing County

Myrna Peterson, Council Member, Itasca County

Ted Stamp, Council Member, Lyon County

E. David Dively, Executive Director

If you have any additional questions or concerns, please email E. David Dively at David.Dively@state.mn.us or call at 651-341-1845.