



Senator Jim Abeler, Chairman  
Human Services Reform Finance and Policy  
95 University Ave West #3215  
St. Paul MN, 55155

March 14th, 2017

Senator Abeler and Committee Members,

Thank you for authoring Senate File 1515, a bill that will create pathways to competitive employment for young people with disabilities across the state.

This bill was written with three principals in mind. First, to create a program that not only complies with WIOA, but is purposely built to take advantage of its provisions. Second, to create a pay-for-performance system that is focused only on outcomes; and third, to create a mechanism for providers to transition their business model towards services that are integrated and community based.

By assisting individuals during this crucial transition, we can relieve pressure on the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Extended Employment (EE) programs. We know results-based programs work because they've been tested in Minnesota and in Washington, and the pilots show significant cost savings over traditional programs. But the benefits that really matter are to the individuals, who will now have resources to make decisions in other areas of their lives, and to all of us, who get to interact with these fantastic Minnesotans at the workplace everyday.

Basically this program will result in these graduates working in their communities at competitive wages while meeting the needs of local businesses as valued employees. By making the last day of high school look a lot like the first day after graduation, Minnesota can provide for a seamless transition that WIOA envisions.

That's the reason why I founded this organization. I know we can create a system to serve young people with disabilities that focuses on empowerment, choice, and good pay. Because we all know about the freedom that comes with a consistent paycheck. Ultimately, it boils down to believing that **special education graduates work!**

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nancy Gurney'.

Nancy Gurney  
Board Chair, Special Education Graduates Work  
President and CFO, Opportunity Services