



Guild

122 Wabasha St. S.
Suite 400
St. Paul, MN 55107
Phone: 651.291.0067
Fax: 651.291.8555
www.guildservices.org

3/16/23

Members of the Workforce Development Policy and Finance Committee,

I am writing today to ask you to support HF 1697, providing increased funding for Individual Placements and Support (IPS) services in Minnesota. Guild was one of the first IPS providers in Minnesota. We added this service to our portfolio of Mental Health and Housing service offerings because we believe that work is a critical component to recovery.

During the time we have been providing IPS services, just over 10 years, we have continued to marvel about the incredible impact of competitive employment in someone's recovery. IPS is different in that our clients are placed in fully integrated, competitive employment settings that utilize their strengths and passions. Our team works with people for years, allowing our clients to try out several opportunities, learning about personal challenges and opportunities for growth, as they go.

Eli is just one of the Guild IPS clients whose life has been changed by the service. Eli struggled with depression and anxiety throughout his life and became addicted to opioids in high school after the tragic deaths of two important people in his life followed by a significant knee injury. He was in and out of jail on probation violations and had given-up on himself. Our employment specialist first met him through his Scott County Case Manager and stayed with him through many ups and downs. Eventually, Eli found his purpose, and supported his sobriety, by working at a job he loves. Eli says:

"Without Julie [Guild Employment Specialist], I wouldn't be standing here today. I wouldn't be working. I would still be using drugs. I would be in prison... or worse. I don't hide from my pain and mental illness anymore. I'm not afraid to confront my issues. I have hopes and dreams for the future. I want to go back to school. I want a house up North on a couple of acres of land. I want 2 dogs and maybe a family someday. Because of Guild, my future is bright."

IPS is underfunded. As an agency, we supplement the program through fundraising (losing over \$100k in 2022) because of our belief in the benefit to our clients and the communities we serve. We want to expand these services to more people, instead, we're at risk of losing 27% of existing funds without this legislative action. This bill will prevent the reduction and allow DEED to expand the services throughout the state, serving an additional 325 Minnesotans per year. For Guild, this increase is not likely to go towards filling our gap, but we are supportive of this based on the life-changing work of IPS.

Please reach out to me for additional information.

Julie Bluhm, CEO

jbluhm@guildservices.org

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