# Minnesota Statewide Independent Living Council Minutes

**May 8, 2025, 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

**Call to Order:** The Minnesota Statewide Independent Living Council met on May 8th at State Services for the Blind, 2200 University Ave West, Suite 240, Conference Room D, St Paul MN and by Zoom. Robyn Block, Chairman, called the meeting to order 9:10 a.m. with a quorum present.

**Present**: Bethany Schwerr, Deborah Gleason, Frances Lane, Jacob Schuller, Jacob Knaffla, Jennifer Clement, Joe Dailey, Kelly Lemke, KiloMarie Granda, Linda Lingen, Monique Doward, Robyn Block, Stephen Larson

**Absent:** Morris Thompson

**Ex Officio Present:** Amy McClellan, Michele Severson

**Guests:** Brad Westerlund, Rand Stenhjem

**Staff:** Jo Erbes

**Approve May 8, 2025 Agenda** – Linda Lingen made the motion to approve the meeting agenda. Stephen Larson seconded the motion. The motion carried

**Approve Minutes - March 20, 2025** – Stephen Larson made a motion to approve the minutes for the March 20, 2025 meeting. Joe Dailey seconded the motion. The motion carries with one abstention.

**Approve Correction to the November14, 2024 meeting – Deborah Gleason made a motion to add the following information to the November 14, 2024 council meeting:** Following discussion of the fiscal year-end financial statement, there was discussion using unspent funds from FY 2024 to support the third tier of the Hierophant proposal for the IL study. Stephen Larson noted the Executive Committee and the Finance Committee supported the agreement with Hierophant. Stephen Larson made the motion to award up to $72,000 to Hierophant for a study of IL services. Joe Dailey seconded the motion. The motion carried with council members voice votes. One council member abstained from voting.

**MCD Update** – Michele Severson reported the Legislative Forum is online with captioning. The new legislative coordinator will start later in the summer. The guardianship task force is suspended. Future events: a Juneteenth event in Rochester, Pride in St Paul, County fairs in Kandiyohi and Polk county and Minnesota State Fair. MNSILC provides materials for events.

**SSB Update –** Amy McClellan stated there is a transitionto have VR in the SSB space. The Governor has ordered state staff to be in-house 50% of the time. SSB has 5 new staff for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), and 20 new volunteers.

**Training - Partners in Policy Making –** Brenton Rice talked about recruitment Partners in Policy Making for 2025-2026. To date there have been 1200 partners graduates in MN. The purpose of Partners is to teach advocacy skills and encourage people to become involved in public programs. In order to participate people must be a person with disabilities or a parent or legal guardian of a child with developmental disabilities. The deadline to apply is July 11. Deborah Gleason and Bethany Schwerr are recent participants who spoke in favor of the program. The application can be found at <https://mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/>

**SRC – G Update –** Deborah Gleason reported there has been a reduction in funding. They are going to implement a tier 1 waiting list. VRS employees are really struggling – they don’t want to serve fewer people and they have less money**.** They are complying with thereturn to office mandate. Beginning to work on the annual report.

**SRC – B Update** - Kelly Lemke has been appointed by the Governor to serve on the SRC – B.

**MN STAR Update** - KiloMarie Granda volunteered to apply to serve on the STAR council.

**DEED/VRS Update –** Brad Westerlund reported that Anne Paulson, Ex Officio Member from DEED/VRS has accepted another job and will no longer serve on MNSILC. Meghan Hanson has been identified as the new Ex Officio member from DEED. She works with Extended Employment. Brad Westerlund will continue to serve on the Executive Committee and the Finance Committee. He also noted the return-to-work requirement. VRS laid off 70 employees due to budget shortages.

**Update on contract with Hierophant –** The Executive Committee and Finance Committee met on June 5, 2025 and made the recommendation to not pursue the Hierophant agreement at this time. The Council discussed the challenges encountered with the process used to select an organization to complete the study included in the SPIL. It has been suggested that MNSILC move forward with a Request for Proposal (RFP) to complete the study. The goal would be to have an RFP by August 31st. Linda Lingen made a motion to accept the recommendation of the joint Executive Committee and Finance Committee to not pursue the Hierophant agreement. Stephen Larson seconded the motion. The motion passed. 9 in favor, 2 no, one abstains.

**Administration on Community Living (ACL)** – Peter Nye, IL Program Manager, reviewed accurate sources of covering congressional activities. He encouraged council members to write letters to their congressmen telling their stories about how IL services help people become employed. He noted the PPR should be approved during the month of June. He encouraged the SILC to communicate with him if there are concerns. He wants to know about concerns before they appear in the PPR.

**Public Comments** - Bethany Schwerr works in the housing department at DHS. She noted that they want to learn more about the council.

Stephen Larson noted that Rehab services have helped many people become involved in their community.

**Participation in Events – Deaf Resource Fair** - Linda Lingen talked with other vendors and have ideas for future trainings. Linda and Jo Erbes talked to individuals with hearing loss about serving on the council. Had a fair number of people stop.

**Charting the C’s** – Robyn Block and Stephen Larson staff the MNSILC table. They noted the people they talked to think the CILs were group homes. They handed out annual reports and applications for council members. Suggest the Outreach Committee plan a presentation for this event. The Advocacy Committee talked about creating a tag line for the display. Encouraged people email Jo ideas for a tag line. One suggestion was: “Empowering and equipping people with disabilities to live independently.” Robyn would recommend doing this event again next year.

**IL Philosophy/Person-Centered Planning –** An article in the SSB newsletter raised concerns about whether SSB followed the IL Philosophy or Person-Centered Planning. There was discussion about the difference between the two and the assurance the SSB supports the IL Philosophy.

**Advocacy Opportunities –**

Letter drafted by Stephen Larson – Stephen talked about getting agitated by the language of the President. The council talked about drafting a message that is not political or partisan. It was suggested that all people have something to contribute based on their knowledge and not their physical ability. MNSILC needs to speak out. Put together a group to draft a letter. Jacob Knaffla, Bethany Schwerr and Stephen Larson volunteered.

Access North Template Letter to congressmen – Several council members sent letter to their legislators. Jacob Knaffla shared a letter drafted by Access North. NCIL has an action network link on their website with other topics such as Section 504, Medicaid, and others. Personal stories – call, write, email, tell success stories with a personal touch. NCIL Advocacy in Action: <https://ncil.org/advocacy-action/> Jo send information about how to find an individual’s congressman.

Letter from the Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities – Asking to sign on to the letter that addressed removal of DD Act Programs, such as the Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities, (DD Council), the Protection and Advocacy Program (P&A) and the Institution on Community Inclusion (UCEDD) (ICI). MACIL supported the letter. Jacob Schuller made a motion to sign on to the letter as drafted by the DD Council, seconded by Deborah Gleason. Discussed the ask in the letter. Motion passed by voice vote.

**Committee Reports**

Advocacy Committee – Deborah Gleason – position papers for the NCIL conference, update Transportation and create an employment statement and potential changes to HHS that will impact the disability community. The Committee will work on a survey about dentistry and MN bill about a dentistry task force. Disability Rights Voting week and letters to congress.

Executive Committee - The Executive Committee recommends sending KiloMarie Granda to the NCIL Conference, they revised visits to the CILs, talked about budget challenges, the Hierophant agreement and the correction to the November 2024 meeting. Talked about going to Access North in July.

Outreach Committee – Joe Dailey reviewed the letter from Stephen Larson, working on the use of DEI language on the website, mission and vision, how to reach underserved and unserved people.

Finance Committee – Jo Erbes reviewed the Expenditure Report for October through March.

Reports Committee - Annual report has been distributed to Minnesota legislators, county commissioners and the governor. PPR was signed and delivered.

**Adjourn** – Motion made by Deborah Gleason, seconded by Kilo Marie Granda to start the meeting on July 10th at 10:00 a.m. The motion passed.

Joe Dailey made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:30 p.m. Seconded by Joe Dailey. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by Linda Lingen

Recorded by Jo Erbes, MNSILC Coordinator

mnsilc/meetings/minutes/2025