

Disability Advocacy:

My journey to stronger advocacy

CONTEXT

This case study highlights the ongoing disability advocacy work led by a professional with lived experience of disability and commitment to systems change. In addition to serving on several statewide councils related to accessibility, workforce development, and independent living, the work spans across multiple efforts aimed at ensuring that the voices of people with disabilities are central in decision-making, policy, and program design.

THE TASK AT HAND

This advocacy work centers on addressing persistent accessibility barriers in two critical areas: transportation and employment. While grounded in personal lived experience, the work also aims to shift systems and mindsets at a broader scale.

Key goals include:

- Increasing representation of people with disabilities in policy discussions and decision-making
- Improving access to services, infrastructure, and employment pathways
- Changing perceptions held by those in positions of influence, especially regarding what people with disabilities can and should expect
- Influencing policy at the state level, particularly in areas related to transportation equity and inclusive workforce development
- Ongoing self-education to deepen knowledge and understanding, and to better support the communities being represented

Primary stakeholders include legislators, business leaders, and service providers: ranging from healthcare professionals to employers, legal experts, and public administrators - all of whom play a role in shaping access and equity.



Emerging
Businesses

Mergers/
Acquisitions



Business
Sustainability

Speaking/
Training



Disability
Advocacy



"Some of the most clear and informative reporting I have seen" Client VP

"You ask the questions I did not know needed answering." Client

APPROACH

This advocacy journey began not in a conference room or on a stage, but in daily life as someone with a disability that was long hidden, then later embraced as a core part of identity and strength.

- Advocacy methods evolved quickly and naturally, becoming part of everyday communication. This included:
- Formal methods like testimony, presentations, writing, and advising on boards and councils
- Informal advocacy through conversations, social media, and relationship-building
- Using “small talk” as a tool, weaving accessibility and inclusion into everyday dialogue

A strong commitment to inclusion was reinforced through programs like Partners in Policymaking and the ADA Symposium, which broadened exposure to a wide range of disability experiences. These networks made it clear that advocacy must account for intersecting needs.

AI has become a powerful tool to research, hone messaging and bounce ideas.

TOOLS AND PROCESSES

Tracking and Organization

Advocacy efforts are supported by a self-developed tracker to log engagements, events, and outcomes. Digital folders are organized by topic, and a simple project planner helps keep advocacy efforts aligned with personal priorities and council objectives.

Shared Tools and Resources

- Accessible presentation templates
- Goal-setting training materials
- A tracking system for monitoring goals in a statewide disability plan
- An article framing DEI through a disability lens
- Efforts to help establish a speaker’s bureau to amplify other voices

Preparation and Practice

Research is a critical first step ensuring current, accurate information. To build confidence and clarity, presentations are rehearsed aloud (sometimes to a highly attentive audience of stuffed animals) and reviewed using read-aloud features.

Movement Participation

The work intersects with broader advocacy initiatives, including collaboration with Minnesota-based disability organizations and participation in national events like NCIL’s Disability Advocacy Day, meeting with legislators to elevate issues affecting the community.

RESULTS

The impact of this advocacy work continues to grow, not just in policies or plans, but in people. One of the most meaningful outcomes has been a shift in how others perceive and engage with disability-related issues.

- Recognition as a Trusted Voice
- Legislative Awareness
- Changing Perceptions

The journey has also brought profound personal growth:

- Increased Confidence: Once hesitant to speak publicly, there is now strength and clarity
- Expanded Knowledge: Understanding of how different needs intersect with systems and society.
- Growing Influence: Multiple leadership roles and direct conversations with state legislators.
- Community Impact: Perhaps most powerfully, this work has helped others grow in courage and voice.

CONCLUSION

This case study reflects the power of lived experience, practical advocacy, and steady, everyday efforts to create change. By combining curiosity, compassion, strategy, and voice, this work continues to shift systems and hearts. And that helps shape a future where accessibility and inclusion are not special accommodations, but shared expectations. A ripple effect that continues to spread through each conversation, council meeting, and shared story.